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Buenos Aires

Mix together a beautiful European-like city with attractive residents (call them *porteños*), gourmet cuisine, awesome shopping, a frenzied nightlife and top-drawer activities, and you get Buenos Aires, a cosmopolitan metropolis with both slick neighborhoods and equally downtrodden areas – but that's part of the appeal. It's an elegant, seductive place with a ragged edge, laced with old-world languor and yet full of contemporary attitude. BA is somehow strangely familiar, but unlike any other city in the world.

In between cutting-edge designer boutiques, ritzy neighborhoods and grand parks are unkempt streets full of spewing buses and bustling fervor. Seek out the classic BA: the old-world cafes, colonial architecture, fun outdoor markets and diverse communities. Rub shoulders with the formerly rich and famous in Recoleta's cemetery, making sure to sidestep the ubiquitous dog piles on the sidewalks. Fill your belly at a *parrilla* (steak restaurant), then spend the night partying away in Palermo Viejo's trendiest dance club. Hunt for that antique gem in a dusty San Telmo shop, or visit on Sunday for the *barrio's* spectacularly popular fair. Learn to sweep your leg dancing the sultry tango, and then attend a super-passionate *fútbol* match between River and Boca. These unforgettable adventures (and many more) are just waiting for you to go out and experience them.

Everyone knows someone who has been here and raved about it. You've put it off long enough. Come to Buenos Aires and you'll understand why so many people have fallen in love with this amazing city, and even decided to stay. There's a good chance you'll be one of them.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Commune with BA's rich and famous dead at the **Recoleta cemetery** (p101)
- Marvel at those amazingly high leg kicks at a tango show in **San Telmo** (p124)
- Shop the fun and stylish designer boutiques in **Palermo Viejo** (p129)
- Feast on tasty steaks or more exotic cuisine in Palermo's **Las Cañitas** (p119)
- Party all night long in BA's chic and super-happening nightclubs in **Palermo** (p126)

- TELEPHONE CODE: 011
- POPULATION: 3 MILLION
- AREA: 200 SQ KM

HISTORY

Buenos Aires was settled in 1536 by Pedro de Mendoza, an adventurous and aristocratic Spaniard who financed his own expedition to South America. Food shortages and attacks by indigenous groups prompted Mendoza's hasty departure in 1537; to add insult to injury, he died at sea on the way home. Meanwhile, other expedition members left the settlement, sailed 1600km upriver and founded Asunción (now capital of Paraguay).

By 1541 the original settlement was completely abandoned. In 1580 a new group of settlers moved downriver from Asunción under Juan de Garay's command and repopulated Mendoza's abandoned outpost.

For the next 196 years Buenos Aires was a backwater and a smuggler's paradise, due to trade restrictions imposed by mother Spain. All the same, its population had grown to around 20,000 by 1776, the year Spain decreed the city capital of the enormous new viceroyalty of Río de la Plata. Suddenly Buenos Aires was a very important place, and many *porteños* have had a notoriously high opinion of themselves and their city ever since.

After repelling British invasions in 1806 and 1807, *porteños* reckoned they could handle themselves without Spain's help (or interference). Napoleon's 1808 conquest of Spain led to BA's *cabildo* (town council) cutting ties with the mother country in May 1810. Decades of power struggles between BA and the other former viceregal provinces ensued, escalating more than once into civil war.

Finally in 1880 the city was declared the federal territory of Buenos Aires, a separate entity from the surrounding province of the same name, and the nation's capital forevermore.

Buenos Aires' population by then was nearly half a million, and waves of immigrants (chiefly Spanish and Italian) continued to roll in. Many of them settled on the southern edge of town, to work in the booming port and the meat-processing industry. The 1871 yellow-fever epidemic had already driven the wealthy northward, and now the middle class abandoned La Boca and San Telmo to the newcomers.

The nation's agricultural exports soared from 1880 to 1914, which resulted in great wealth accumulating in BA. Well-heeled *porteños* built opulent French-style mansions, and the government spent lavishly on public works, including parks, ornate offices and a subway. Much of the unique look BA sports today dates from this period, although Av 9 de Julio's transformation into a block-wide megaboulevard didn't occur until the late 1930s.

But the boom times didn't last forever. Immigration burgeoned, export prices began to drop and workers became frustrated and militant. The Wall Street crash of 1929 dealt the final blow to the country's markets, and soon the first of many military coups took over. It was the end of Argentina's Golden Age.

Immigration to Buenos Aires kept climbing, but now it was mostly mestizos (people of mixed Indian and Spanish descent) from the rest of Argentina. Shantytowns popped up and social problems grew as the city failed to absorb its increasing population. The capital was the center of the country's economy, but as its prosperity waned there were no other centers of commercialism to help.

Pollution, poverty, unemployment and decaying infrastructure were constant problems in the 19th century, and even today greater Buenos Aires holds an astounding one-third of Argentina's population. Extreme governments and a roller-coaster economy have been constant plagues, but at least the 20th century saw a turn-around in the country's direction, though the recent global financial crisis has had an impact. For more on Argentina's roller-coaster history, see p28.

ORIENTATION

Buenos Aires is a huge city, but most places of interest to travelers are concentrated in just a few easily accessible neighborhoods.

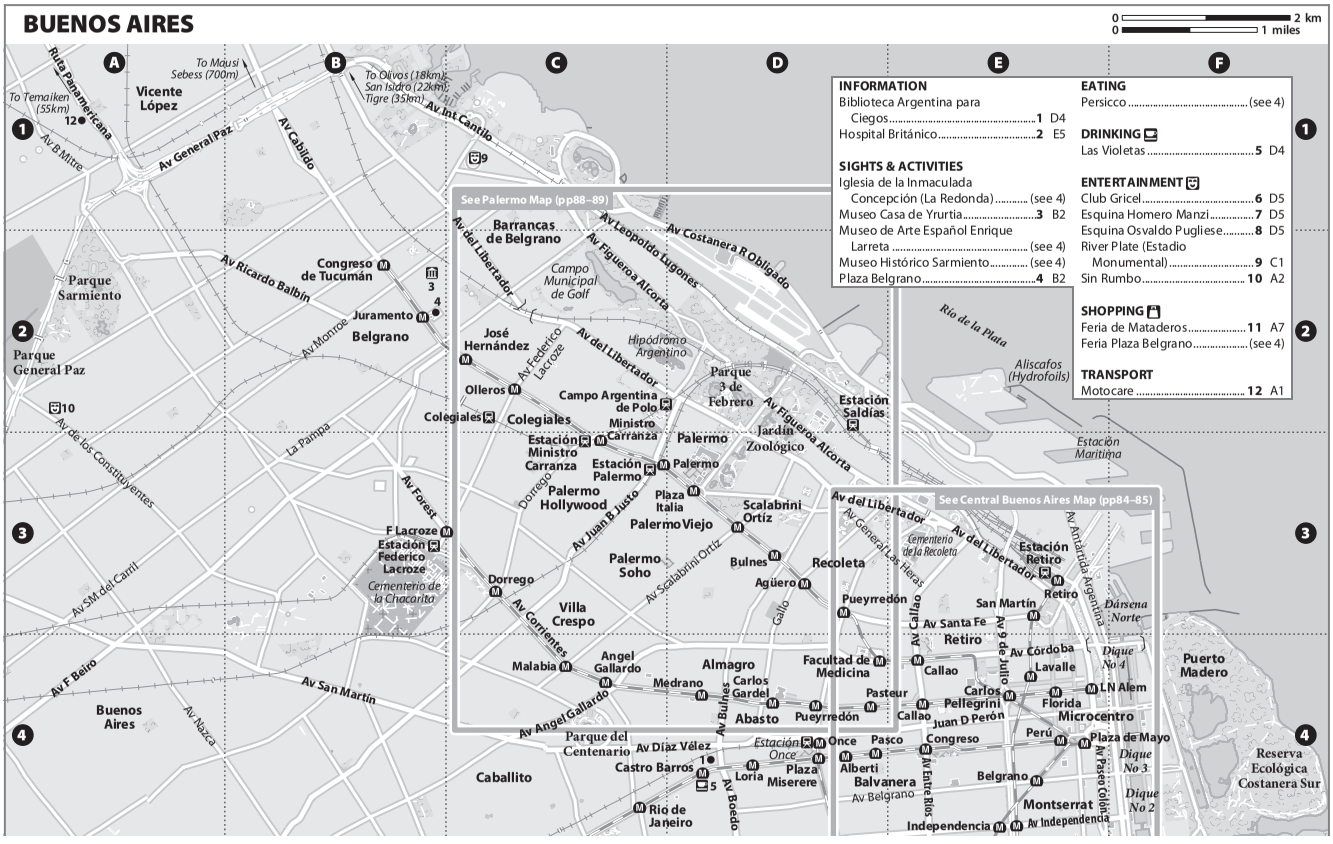
At the heart of the city is the Microcentro, the downtown business center; it's small enough that you can walk around it fairly easily. Further south is San Telmo, known for its tango and its Sunday antiques market. South of here is La Boca, famous for its colorful houses clad in corrugated metal.

West of the Microcentro is Congreso, BA's seat of politics. To the north is Retiro (with the city's main train and bus station) and northwest, Recoleta, upscale areas of museums and fancy stores. Further north are Palermo and Belgrano, upper-middle-class suburbs with spacious parks and plenty of shopping.

BA's Ezeiza airport is about 35km south of the center; see p135 for details. Aeroparque Jorge Newbery airport is northwest of downtown BA.

(Continued on page 92)

BUENOS AIRES



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Canal Sur
Dársena Sur
Sargento Ponce
Autopista La Plata - Buenos Aires
Av Mitre
Vuelta de Rocha
Barracas
La Boca
Av Brasil
See La Boca Map (p91)
San Juan
San Telmo
Av Patricios
Av Montes de Oca
Estación Constitución
Autopista 9 de Julio
Avellaneda
Camino General Belgrano
Constitución
San José
Entre Ríos
Av Entre Ríos
Av Pavón
Pichincha
Av Jujuy
Av A Alcorta
Av Caseros
6
General Urquiza
Jujuy
Av Boedo
Av Sáenz
Boedo
7
8
Av Chiclana
Av La Plata
Autopista 25 de Mayo
Av La Plata
Parque Rivadavia
Primera Junta
José M Moreno
Emilio Mitre
Av Castañares
Av Petit Moreno
Av 27 de Febrero
Riachuelo
Lanus
Lomas de Zamora
Av Rivadavia
Varela
Plaza de los Virreyes
Parque Almirante Guillermo Brown
Golf Club
Lago de Regata
Calle de la Rivera S
Av Juan Alberdi
Av San Juan
Av Eva Perón
Autopista Luis J Dellepiane
Av Cnel Roca
Av Ff de la Cruz
Parque Avellaneda
Av Segurola
Av Gaona
Autopista Tte General Richieri
To Ezeiza (Aeropuerto Internacional Ministro Pistarini)
Av General Paz
La Matanza
5
6
7
8

CENTRAL BUENOS AIRES

Puerto Madero
Juana Manso
Olga Cossettini
Dealessi
Dique No 3
Dique No 2
Dique No 1
Av Alicia Moreau de Justo
Av Ing Huergo
Av E Madero
Av de la Rábida
Plaza Ap Justo
Av Paseo Colón
Azopardo
Venezuela
Paseo Colón
Balcarce
Defensa
Chile
Pasaje San Lorenzo
Plazoleta Olazábal
Av Independencia
San Telmo
Mercado San Telmo
Plaza Dorrego
Av San Juan
Cochabamba
Perú
See La Boca Map (p91)
Av Corrientes
LN Alem
25 de Mayo
Florida
Microcentro
Diagonal Roque Sáenz Peña
Juan D Perón
Sarmiento
Parque Colón
Catedral
Plaza de Mayo
La City
Bolívar
Balcarce
5 de Julio
México
Montserrat
Bolívar
Perú
Av 9 de Julio
Diagonal Norte
Carlos Pellegrini
Plaza de la República
Av de Mayo
Piedras
Tacuarí
Moreno
Bernardo de Irigoyen
Independencia
Chacabuco
Carlos Calvo
Humberto Primo
Barracas
Av San Juan
Lima
Salta
Adolfo Alsina
Venezuela
Mexico
Estados Unidos
Constitución
San José
Tribunales
Uruguay
Talcahuano
Libertad
Bartolomé Mitre
Av Rivadavia
Santiago del Estero
Juan D Perón
Paraná
Plaza Lorea
Plaza del Congreso
Luis Sáenz Peña
Virrey Cevallos
Montevideo
Paseo la Plaza
Rodríguez Peña
Congreso
Solís
Av Entre Ríos
Entre Ríos
Lavalle
Callao
Riobamba
Combate de los Pozos
Sarandí
Rincón
Junín
Pasco
Plaza 1 de Mayo
Pichincha
Av Independencia
Av Belgrano
Av San Juan
Pasteur
Uriburu
Pasteur
Azcuénaga
Larrea
Alberti
Balvanera
Hipólito Yrigoyen
Jujuy
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Biblioteca Lincoln **3** D4
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Catamarca Tourist Office **8** B4
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Centro Cultural Recoleta **10** B2
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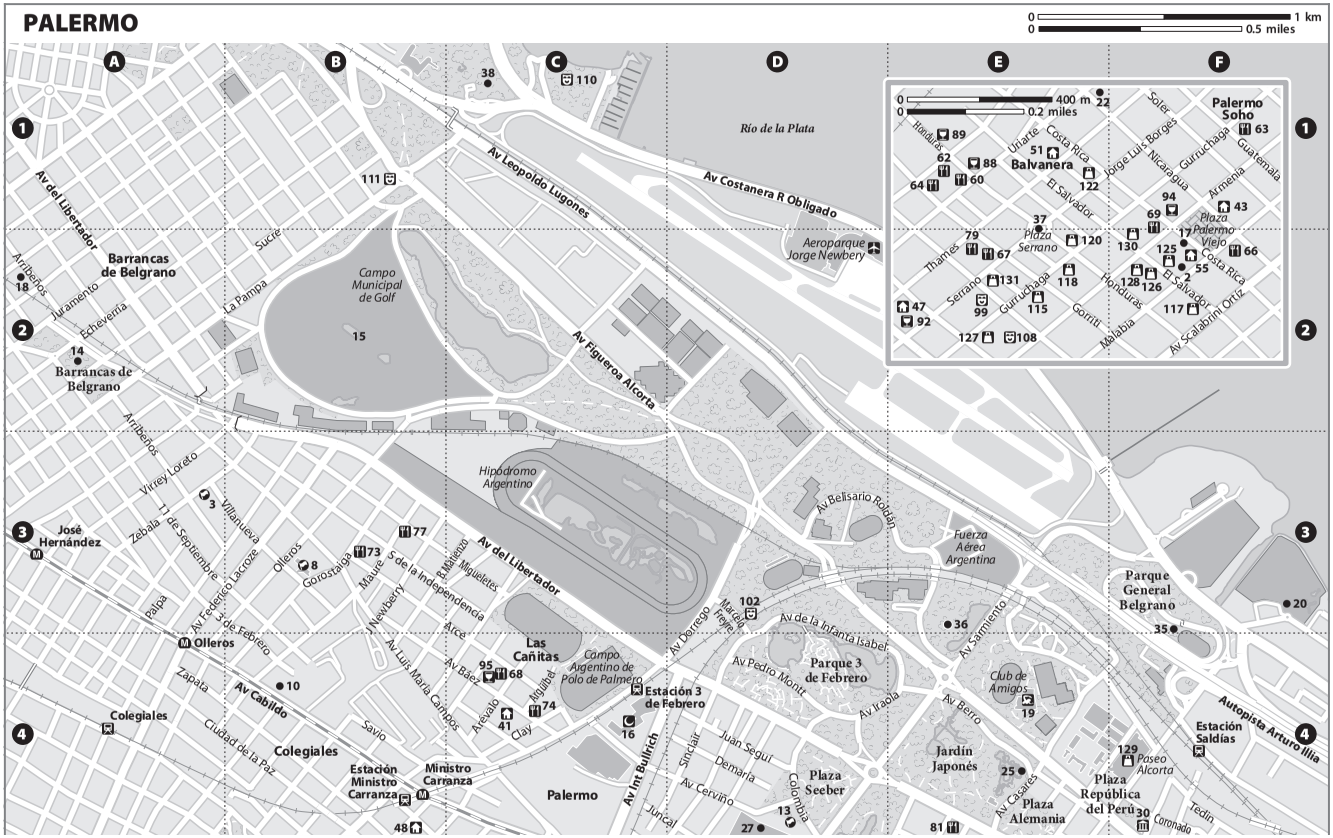
PALERMO
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0 400 m
0 0.2 miles
Río de la Plata
Av Leopoldo Lugones
Av Costanera R Obligado
Av del Libertador
Av Figueroa Alcorta
Av Cabildo
Av Int Bullrich
Av Belisario Roldán
Av de la Infanta Isabel
Av Sarmiento
Av Pedro Montt
Av Dorrego
Av Báez
Av Luis María Campos
Av Federico Lacroze
Av Warnes
Av Scalabrini Ortiz
Av Córdoba
Av Juan B Justo
Av Corrientes
Av Santa Fe
Av Las Heras
Av Coronel Díaz
Av Pueyrredón
Av Callao
Av Cerviño
Av Casares
Av Berro
Av Iraola
Av Libertador
Av Juan Bautista Alberdi
Av Dorrego
Av Luis María Campos
Av Federico Lacroze
Av Warnes
Av Scalabrini Ortiz
Av Córdoba
Av Juan B Justo
Av Corrientes
Av Santa Fe
Av Las Heras
Av Coronel Díaz
Av Pueyrredón
Av Callao
Av Cerviño
Av Casares
Av Berro
Av Iraola
Av Libertador
Av Juan Bautista Alberdi
Barrancas de Belgrano
Campo Municipal de Golf
Aeroparque Jorge Newbery
Hipódromo Argentino
Campo Argentino de Polo de Palermo
Fuerza Aérea Argentina
Parque General Belgrano
Parque 3 de Febrero
Club de Amigos
Jardín Japonés
Plaza Alemania
Plaza República del Perú
Paseo Alcorta
Estación Saldías
Autopista Arturo Illia
Palermo Soho
Balvanera
Plaza Serrano
Plaza Palermo Viejo
Las Cañitas
Estación 3 de Febrero
Palermo
Ministro Carranza
Estación Ministro Carranza
Colegiales
Olleros
José Hernández
Barrancas de Belgrano
Plaza Seeber
Soler
Uriarte
Thames
Serrano
Honduras
Gorriti
Malabia
Gurruchaga
Nicaragua
Guatemala
Armenia
Costa Rica
El Salvador
Jorge Luis Borges
Arribeños
Juramento
Echeverría
La Pampa
Sucre
Virrey Loreto
Zabala
11 de Septiembre
Villanueva
Olleros
Gorostiaga
Maure
Newbery
Palpa
3 de Febrero
Zapata
Ciudad de la Paz
Savio
Arcos
Migueletes
Alcea
Báez
Aguilliet
Clay
Arévalo
Sinclair
Juncal
Demaría
Colombia
Tedín
Coronado
Marcelo T. de Alvear
Av Belisario Roldán
Av de la Infanta Isabel
Av Sarmiento
Av Pedro Montt
Av Iraola
Av Berro
Av Cerviño
Av Casares
Av Int Bullrich
Av Leopoldo Lugones
Av Costanera R Obligado
Av del Libertador
Av Figueroa Alcorta
Av Cabildo
Av Luis María Campos
Av Federico Lacroze
Av Warnes
Av Scalabrini Ortiz
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Av Juan B Justo
Av Corrientes
Av Santa Fe
Av Las Heras
Av Coronel Díaz
Av Pueyrredón
Av Callao
Av Cerviño
Av Casares
Av Berro
Av Iraola
Av Libertador
Av Juan Bautista Alberdi
A
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4

Palermo Chico
Av Figueroa Alcorta
Plaza República de Chile
Plaza Naciones Unidas
Plaza R Darío
Plaza Mitre
Av del Libertador
Plaza República del Paraguay
Barrio Norte
Facultad de Medicina
Pasteur
Av Santa Fe
Pueyrredón
Av Corrientes
Once
Almagro
Carlos Gardel
Medrano
Av Callao
Scalabrini Ortiz
Palermo
Estación Palermo
Palermo Viejo
Plaza Palermo Viejo
Plaza Serrano
Jardín Botánico Carlos Thays
Jardín Zoológico
Plaza Italia
Parque Las Heras
Hospital Municipal Juan Fernández
Hospital Alemán
Hospital de Niños
Plaza Monseñor de Andrea
Plaza Alférez Sobral
Plaza Güemes
Plaza Dominican
Plaza Vicente López
Parque del Centenario
Villa Crespo
Malabia
Angel Gallardo
Abasto
Agüero
Bulnes
Dorrego
Juan B Justo
Av Juan B Justo
Av Córdoba
Av Cabildo
Av Dorrego
Av Angel Gallardo
Av Corrientes
Av Pueyrredón
Av Las Heras
Av Coronel Díaz
Av Sarmiento
Av Scalabrini Ortiz
Av Córdoba
Av Estado de Israel
Av Medrano
Av Bulnes
Av Warnes
Av Dorrego
Av San Martín
Av Triunvirato
Av Nazca
Av Federico Lacroze
Av Del Barco Centenera
Av Ángel Gallardo
Av Ancha Norte de Avellaneda
Av Ancha Sur de Avellaneda
Av Ricardo Balbín
Av Gral Paz
Av Constituyentes
Av Lugones
Av Monroe
Av Juramento
Av Congreso
Av Triunvirato
Av Corrientes
Av Santa Fe
Av Córdoba
Av Dorrego
Av Juan B Justo
Av Scalabrini Ortiz
Av Pueyrredón
Av Callao
Av Coronel Díaz
Av Las Heras
Av Sarmiento

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INFORMATION

Bookstores

El Ateneo (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4325-6801; Florida 340; 🕒 9am-10pm Mon-Fri, to 5pm Sat) Modern bookstore with several branches; see also p132.
Walrus Books (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4300-7135; Estados Unidos 617; 🕒 noon-8pm Tue-Sun) The best English-language bookstore for quality new and used literature and nonfiction.

Concierge Services

BA Cultural Concierge (☎ 011-15-5457-2035; www.baculturalconcierge.com) Madi Lang's concierge service will help you plan itineraries, arrange airport transport, get a cell phone, run errands, reserve theater tickets, send a care package, scout out a potential apartment and do a thousand other things for your trip to run smoothly.

Cultural Centers

Centro Cultural Borges (Map pp84-5; ☎ 5555-5359; www.ccborges.org.ar; cnr Viamonte & San Martín) One of BA's best, offering cheap art exhibits, music and workshops.
Ciudad Cultural Konex (Map pp88-9; ☎ 4864-3200; www.ciudadculturalkonex.org; Sarmiento 3125) Apart from workshops and exhibitions, it stages theatrical performances and percussion shows; see p129.
Centro Cultural Recoleta (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4807-6340; www.centroculturalrecoleta.org; Junín 1930) Features art exhibits, a cinema, a kids' science museum and outdoor films in summer.
Centro Cultural Ricardo Rojas (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4954-5523; www.rojas.uba.ar; Corrientes 2038) Exceptionally good, offering a very wide range of quality offerings, including inexpensive classes.
Centro Cultural San Martín (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4374-1251; www.ccgsm.gov.ar; Sarmiento 1551) An excellent cultural resource, offering many free or inexpensive offerings.

There are also several foreign cultural centers, all offering libraries, cultural events and classes:
Alianza Francesa (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4322-0068; www.alianzafrancesa.org.ar; Av Córdoba 946)
British Arts Centre (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4393-2004; www.britishartscentre.org.ar; Suipacha 1333)
Instituto Goethe (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4318-5600; www.goethe.de/buenosaires; Av Corrientes 319)

Emergency

Ambulance (☎ 107)
Police (☎ 911)
Tourist police (Comisaría del Turista; Map pp84-5; ☎ 4346-5748, 0800-999-5000; Av Corrientes 436; 🕒 24hr) Provides interpreters and helps victims of robberies and rip-offs.

Immigration

Immigration office (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4317-0200; Antártida Argentina 1355; 🕒 7:30am-1:30pm Mon-Fri) Offers 90-day visa extensions for AR$300.

Internet Access

Internet cafes and *locutorios* (private telephone offices) with internet access are very common everywhere in the center; you can often find

BUENOS AIRES IN...

Two Days

Start with a stroll in **San Telmo** (p98) and duck into some antiques stores. Walk north to **Plaza de Mayo** (p96) for a historical perspective, then wander the **Microcentro** (p95), perhaps veering east to **Puerto Madero** (p97) – a great spot for a break.

Keep heading northward into **Retiro** (p100) and **Recoleta** (p101), stopping off at the **Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes** (p101) to admire some impressionism. Be sure to visit the **Cementerio de la Recoleta** (p101) to commune with BA's bygone elite. For dinner and nightlife, **Palermo Viejo** (p102) is hard to beat.

On day two take in the **Congreso** neighborhood (p98) or head to **La Boca** (p99). Shop on **Av Santa Fe** (p129) or **Palermo Viejo** (p129), and at night catch a **tango show** (p124) or a performance at the **Teatro Colón** (p126).

Four Days

Follow the two-day itinerary, then on your third day add a trip to **Tigre** (p137) or **Colonia** (p555) in Uruguay. On the fourth day think about seeing some museums, taking a **tango lesson** (see boxed text, p125), going to the **Mataderos fair** (see boxed text, p133) if it's a weekend, or checking out **Palermo's parks** (p101). Be sure to find yourself a good steak restaurant for your last meal.

one by just walking a couple of blocks in any direction. Rates are cheap and connections are quick. Many cafes and restaurants have free wi-fi.

Internet Resources

The following websites are devoted to Buenos Aires; all are in English or have an English link. For general websites on Argentina, see p21.

Argentine Post (www.argentinepost.com) Useful wide-ranging articles on BA and Argentina.
Budgetba (www.budgetba.blogspot.com) Sporadic entries, but you could save a peso or two.
Bue (www.bue.gov.ar) The city's official website; click 'agenda' for a calendar of happenings.
Buenos Aires Expatriates Group (www.baexpats.org) Popular expat website.
Craigslist (www.buenosaires.en.craigslist.org) Find everything from an apartment to a job to a lover.
Expatargentina (www.expatargentina.wordpress.com) One expat's eclectic musings on living in BA.
Good Morning BA (www.goodmorningba.com) All-around guide to Buenos Aires.
Goodairs (www.goodairs.com) Interesting compilation of articles by a renowned local writer.
Landing Pad BA (www.landingpadBA.com) Good alternative articles on Buenos Aires.
Salt Shaker (www.saltshaker.net) Best for its detailed restaurant reviews.
What's up Buenos Aires (www.whatsupbuenosaires.com) Hip stuff to do today.

Libraries

Biblioteca Lincoln (Map pp84-5; ☎ 5382-1536; www.bcl.edu.ar; Maipú 672) Located inside the Instituto Cultural Argentino-Norteamericano (ICANA); good for English newspapers, magazines and books.
Biblioteca Nacional (Map pp88-9; ☎ 4806-9764; Agüero 2502) BA's main library and downright ugly; occasionally hosts author talks.

The Alianza Francesa, British Arts Centre and Instituto Goethe also have foreign libraries (see opposite).

Media

BA's most popular newspapers are the entertaining, tabloid-like *Clarín* and the more moderate and upper-class *La Nación*. *Página 12* provides a leftist perspective and often breaks important stories. *Ámbito Financiero* is the voice of the business sector, but it also provides good cultural coverage.

The English-language daily *Buenos Aires Herald* covers Argentina and the world from an international perspective, while the livelier *Argentimes* (also in English) has fewer but more in-depth articles. German speakers have *Argentinisches Tageblatt*. These newspapers are available on the internet. International newspapers such as the *New York Times*, the *Guardian* and *Le Monde* are available at many newspaper kiosks, as are magazines such as *Time, Newsweek* and the *Economist*.

Cable TV lives a healthy life in Buenos Aires; international channels include CNN, BBC and ESPN. There are also plenty of reality shows, bimbo-led dance parties and *telenovelas* (soap operas).

Dozens of FM stations serve BA: FM 92.7 has tango, 95.1 has entertainment news and dance and 98.3 has Argentine rock.

NEED AN OFFICE – FOR AN HOUR OR A DAY?

The brainchild of one of BA's many expat entrepeneurs, **Areatres** (Map pp88-9; ☎ 4120-3333; www.areatresworkplace.com; Malabia 1720) is a secure working office where you can rent a desk, cubicle, office or meeting room. There are fax and copy services, complete internet and wi-fi connections, networking social events, a business lounge, a large presentation room and even a zenlike patio in back for the stress-prone. Facilities are cutting-edge – it's like you never left Silicon Valley.

Medical Services

Dental Argentina (☎ 4828-0821; www.dental-argentina.com.ar; Uruguay 292, 9B) Dental services with English-speaking professionals. Also at Laprida 1621, 2B.
Hospital Británico (Map pp82-3; ☎ 4304-1081; www.hospitalbritanico.org.ar; Perdriel 74) Also has a clinic at Marcelo T de Alvear 1573 (Map pp84–5).
Hospital Italiano (Map pp88-9; ☎ 4959-0200; www.hospitalitaliano.org.ar; Gascón 450) Highly regarded hospital.
Medicalls (☎ 4823-5999, 011-15-5156-8384; www.medicalls.com.ar) Tourist-oriented medical attention with English-speaking doctors and dentists; both house calls and clinical services available.

Money

Banks and *cambios* (money-exchange offices) are common in the city center; banks have longer lines and more-limited opening hours but may offer better rates. Avoid the

shady figures on Av Florida, offering *'cambio, cambio, cambio'* to passing pedestrians. Using these unofficial street changers is not recommended; there are quite a few fake bills floating about.

ATMs are the best way to get pesos in Argentina – they're everywhere. There may be limits per withdrawal, but you can withdraw several times per day; some systems let you take nearly AR$1000 out at one time. A fee of AR$11.46 may be charged on ATM transactions by the *local* bank (not including charges by your home bank). Beware: this is a *per transaction* fee.

Even in Buenos Aires it's hard to change traveler's checks. Only a few fancy hotels and banks will take them, and you won't get a favorable rate. One exception is American Express (see following), but you'll have to line up.

The following local representatives can help you replace lost or stolen cards:

American Express (Map pp84-5; ☎ 0810-555-2639; Arenales 707) Also changes traveler's checks 10am to 3pm Monday to Friday.
MasterCard (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4340-5700; Perú 151)
Visa (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4379-3400; Corrientes 1437, basement fl)

Post

The post office has branches located all over the city.

Correo Internacional (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4316-1777; Av Antártida Argentina; 🕒 10am-5pm Mon-Fri) Only for shipping international parcels over 2kg.
DHL Internacional (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4314-2996; www.dhl.com.ar; Av Córdoba 783)
Federal Express (Map pp84-5; ☎ 0810-333-3339; www.fedex.com; Maipú 753)
OCA (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4311-5305; www.oca.com.ar; Viamonte 526) For domestic packages.

Telephone

The easiest way to make a phone call in BA is at a *locutorio* (small telephone office). Street phones require coins or *tarjetas telefónicas* (magnetic phone cards available at many kiosks). Faxes are cheap and widely available at most *locutorios* and internet cafes. For more on telephone services, including cell phones, see p608.

Tourist Information

There are several small government tourist offices or kiosks in BA; hours vary throughout the year. The official tourism site of Buenos Aires is www.bue.gov.ar and the government site is www.buenosaires.gov.ar. Many regions also have tourist offices in BA; see p609.

Florida tourist kiosk (Map pp84-5; Diagonal Norte & Perú)
Puerto Madero tourist kiosk (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4315-4265; Dique 4)
Recoleta tourist kiosk (Map pp84-5; Quintana 596)
Retiro tourist office (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4313-0187; 🕒 7:30am-2:30pm Mon-Fri) In Retiro bus terminal.
Secretaría de Turismo de la Nación (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4312-5550; www.turismo.gov.ar; Av Santa Fe 883; 🕒 9am-5pm Mon-Fri) Dispenses information on Buenos Aires, but focuses on Argentina as a whole.
South American Explorers (Map pp84-5; ☎ 5275-0137; www.saexplorers.org; Roque Saénz Peña 1142, 7A; 🕒 10am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-1pm Sat) A plethora of information and services for the independent traveler, but requires annual membership.

Travel Agencies

The following agencies all arrange tours in BA and Argentina, and staff speak English. For more on city tours, see p107.

Anda Responsible Travel (Map pp88-9; ☎ 3221-0833; www.andatravel.com.ar; Agüero 1131, 1st fl) Organizes tours around BA and Argentina with a 'sustainable' focus in mind, by introducing travelers to local communities, fair-trade organizations and social projects.
HI Travel (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4511-8723; www.hihostels.com; Florida 835, ground fl) Hostelling International's travel office.
Say Hueque (Map pp84-5; ☎ 5199-2517; www.sayhueque.com; Viamonte 749, 6th fl) Friendly company that offers 'independent' packages around BA and Argentina. Also at Guatemala 4845, 1st floor in Palermo (Map pp88–9).
Tangol (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4312-7276; www.tangol.com; Florida 971, Suite 31) Offers city tours, tango shows, guides to *fútbol* games, air tickets and countrywide packages – plus much more.
Wow Argentina (Map pp84-5; ☎ 5239-3019; www.wowargentina.com.ar; Av Santa Fe 882, 12F) Small agency catering to a middle- and upper-class clientele.

DANGERS & ANNOYANCES

Buenos Aires has been getting a bad rap these past few years. Crime does exist (as it does in any big city) and you'll notice that *porteños* are very security conscious, but in general BA is fairly safe. In many places you can comfortably walk around at all hours of the night, even as a lone woman. People stay out very late, and there's almost always somebody else walking down any street at any time. However, you

should be careful at night in some neighborhoods, including Constitución (around the train station), the eastern border of San Telmo, and La Boca (where, outside tourist streets, you should be careful even during the day).

Crime against tourists is almost always of the petty sort, such as pickpocketing in crowded markets or buses, or bag snatches when you're not looking – things smart travelers can certainly guard themselves against. Be wary of the old 'mustard trick' – someone pointing out whatever 'goo' on your clothing, placed there by an accomplice, and offering to clean it up (along with your valuables).

Minor nuisances include the lack of respect shown by vehicles toward pedestrians, lax pollution controls and high noise levels. For dealing with taxis, see p136.

If you've been robbed in some way, contact the tourist police (see Emergency, p92) to file a claim. There's also **Defensoría del Turista** (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4302-7816, 011-15-4046-9682; Defensa 1250; 🕒 11am-6pm Tue-Fri), a sort of ombudsman that helps tourists who have been ripped off or 'abused.'

Remember to use your head wherever you are: don't flash any wealth, don't stagger around drunk, always be aware of your surroundings and look like you know exactly where you're going (even if you don't). And realize that if you're reasonably careful, the closest thing to annoyance you'll experience is being shortchanged, tripping on loose sidewalk tiles, stepping on the ubiquitous dog pile or getting flattened by a crazy bus driver. Watch your step.

SIGHTS

Microcentro

BA's Microcentro is where the big city hustles: here you'll see endless crowds of business suits and power skirts yelling into cell phones as they hasten about the narrow streets in the shadows of skyscrapers and old European buildings.

Florida, a long pedestrian street, is in some ways the main artery of this neighborhood. It's always jammed during the day with businesspeople, shoppers and tourists seeking vehicle-free access from north to south without the ubiquitous bus fumes and honking taxis. Buskers, beggars and street vendors thrive here as well, adding color and noise. Renovated old buildings, such as beautiful Galerías Pacífico (near Florida and Av Córdoba) add elegance to the area.

Further south is BA's busy financial district, where there are several museums to investigate. After that comes Plaza de Mayo, often filled with people resting on benches or taking photos of the surrounding historic sites.

GALERÍAS PACÍFICO

Covering an entire city block, this beautiful French-style **shopping center** (Map pp84-5; ☎ 5555-5110; 🕒 10am-9pm Mon-Sat, noon-9pm Sun) dates from 1889 and boasts vaulted ceilings with paintings done in 1954 by muralists Antonio Berni, Juan Carlos Castagnino, Manuel Colmeiro, Lino Spilimbergo and Demetrio Urruchúa. All were adherents of the *nuevo realismo* (new realism) school of Argentine art. For many years the building was semiabandoned, but a joint Argentine-Mexican team repaired and restored the murals in 1992.

The beautiful structure, which is dotted with fairy lights at night, is now a central meeting place sporting upscale stores and a large food court. Tourist-oriented tango shows take place in front on pedestrian Florida, and the excellent Centro Cultural Borges takes up the top floor.

MUSEO MITRE

Bartolomé Mitre, who became Argentina's president in 1862, resided at this colonial house, now a **museum** (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4394-8240; San Martín 336; admission AR$5; 🕒 2-7:30pm Mon, Tue, Thu & Fri). After leaving office, he founded the influential daily *La Nación,* still a *porteño* institution. The museum provides a good reflection of 19th-century upper-class life. It's full of Mitre's personal effects, such as home decorations and furniture.

MUSEO DE LA POLICÍA FEDERAL

In the heart of the financial district, this **museum** (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4394-6857; San Martín 353, 7th fl; admission free; 🕒 2-6pm Tue-Thu) proudly displays a whole slew of uniforms, medals, guns, drug paraphernalia and gambling exhibits. Avoid taking your kids into the room way in back – grisly forensic photos, along with dummies of murder victims, are barf-bag specials.

MUSEO HISTÓRICO DR ARTURO JÁURETCHE

This **museum** (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4331-1775; Sarmiento 364; admission free; 🕒 10am-6pm Mon-Fri) makes some sense of Argentina's chaotic economic history. Well-lit displays about paper money and

counterfeiting are no doubt scrutinized by BA's current money forgers. The million-peso bill from 1981 gives an idea of the hyperinflation *porteños* had to deal with.

CORREO CENTRAL BUILDING

This massive beaux arts building (Map pp84–5), filling an entire city block, used to house BA's main post office. It took 20 years to complete and was originally modeled on New York City's main post office. In late 2009 the structure was being remodeled into offices and exhibition spaces for Argentina's bicentennial; it may be worth checking out during your tenure to see what's going on.

PLAZA DE MAYO

Planted between the Casa Rosada, the Cabildo and the city's main cathedral is grassy Plaza de Mayo (Map pp84–5), BA's ground zero for the city's most vehement protests. In the plaza's center is the **Pirámide de Mayo**, a small obelisk built to mark the first anniversary of BA's independence from Spain. Looming on the plaza's north side is the impressive **Banco de la Nación** (1939), the work of famed architect Alejandro Bustillo.

Today the plaza attracts camera-toting tourists, the occasional camera thief, and activists. And if you happen to be here on Thursdays at 3:30pm, you'll see the Madres de la Plaza de Mayo; these 'mothers of the disappeared' continue to march as a memorial to their lost children (see p34).

CABILDO

The mid-18th-century town council, now a **museum** (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4342-6729; Bolívar 65; admission AR$1; 🕒 10:30am-5pm Tue-Fri, 11:30am-6pm Sun & holidays) is not the size it once was, due to the building of surrounding avenues, but still has a section of the *recova* (colonnade) that once spanned Plaza de Mayo. The museum inside offers scanty exhibits, but a lively crafts market sets up in the patio on Thursday and Friday – and the cafe is a great place to relax.

CASA ROSADA

Taking up the whole east side of the Plaza de Mayo is the unmistakable pink facade of the Casa Rosada (Pink House; Map pp84–5). Though the offices of 'La Presidenta' Cristina Kirchner are here, the presidential residence is in the calm suburb of Olivos, north of the center.

The side of the palace facing Plaza de Mayo is actually the back of the building. It's from these balconies, however, that Juan and Eva Perón, General Leopoldo Galtieri, Raúl Alfonsín and other politicians have preached to throngs of impassioned Argentines. Pop celebrity Madonna also crooned from here for her movie *Evita*.

The salmon-pink color of the Casa Rosada, which positively glows at sunset, could have come from President Sarmiento's attempt to make peace during his 1868–74 term (blending the red of the Federalists with the white of the Unitarists). Another theory is that the color comes from painting the palace with bovine blood, which was a common practice in the late 19th century.

There are free 20-minute **tours** (☎ 4344-3600) in Spanish available on Saturday and Sunday from 10am to 6pm; just walk in and join the next group waiting for a tour. The **Museo de la Casa Rosada**, off to the southern side, was being renovated at research time but might be open during your tenure.

CATEDRAL METROPOLITANA

BA's baroque **cathedral** (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4331-2845; www.catedralbuenosaires.org.ar; cnr Av Rivadavia & San Martín; 🕒 8am-7pm Mon-Fri, 9am-7:30pm Sat & Sun) is a significant religious and architectural landmark, but more importantly it contains the tomb of General José de San Martín – Argentina's most revered hero. Outside the cathedral you'll see a flame keeping his spirit alive.

Tours of the church and crypt are given at 3:30pm Monday to Saturday; tours of just the crypt are at 11:30am Monday to Friday. All tours are in Spanish. Occasional free choir concerts are also on offer (check the website).

MANZANA DE LAS LUCES

The Manzana de las Luces (Block of Enlightenment) includes the city's oldest colonial church, the Jesuit **Iglesia San Ignacio**. During colonial times this was BA's center of learning, and it still symbolizes high culture in the capital. The first to occupy this block were the Jesuits, and two of the five original buildings of the Jesuit Procuraduría still remain. Dating from 1730, these buildings include defensive tunnels discovered in 1912. The Universidad de Buenos Aires has occupied the site since independence in 1810. **Tours** (Map

pp84-5; ☎ 4331-9534; Perú 272; AR$7) in Spanish are available; drop by for a schedule.

MUSEO DE LA CIUDAD

Wander among the permanent and temporary exhibitions on *porteño* life and history at this **city museum** (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4343-2123; Defensa 219; admission AR$1, Wed free; 🕒 11am-7pm). Salvaged doors and ancient hardware have found a home next door at the museum's annex. Nearby, at the corner of Defensa, is the **Farmacia de la Estrella**, a functioning homeopathic pharmacy with gorgeous woodwork and elaborate late-19th-century ceiling murals.

MUSEO ETNOGRÁFICO JUAN B AMBROSETTI

This small but attractive **anthropological museum** (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4345-8196; Moreno 350; admission AR$3; 🕒 1-7pm Tue-Fri, 3-7pm Sat & Sun) displays collections from the Andean northwest, Patagonia and elsewhere in South America. Beautiful indigenous artifacts, including intricate jewelry and Mapuche ponchos, are presented, while an African and Asian room showcases priceless items. Tours are available in English and Spanish (call for hours).

BASÍLICA DE SANTO DOMINGO

Further south, this 18th-century **Dominican basilica** (cnr Defensa & Av Belgrano) has a colorful history. On its left tower are the replicated scars of shrapnel from fire against British troops who holed up here during the 1806 invasion. The **museum** (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4331-1668; admission by donation; 🕒 by appointment) displays the flags that were captured from the British.

Puerto Madero

The newest and least conventional of the capital's 48 official barrios is Puerto Madero, located east of the Microcentro. Once an old waterfront, it's now a wonderful place to stroll, boasting cobbled paths and a long line of attractive brick warehouses that have been converted into ritzy new lofts, business offices and upscale restaurants. Today Puerto Madero holds BA's most expensive real estate, though it also has a bumpy history.

In the mid-19th century competing commercial interests began to fight over the location of a modernized port for Argentina's burgeoning international commerce. Puerto Madero was finally chosen, and the city's mudflats were transformed into a series of modern basins and harbors consistent with the aspirations and ambitions of a cosmopolitan elite. It was completed in 1898, but Puerto Madero had exceeded its budget and was tarnished by scandal – suspicions arose from the sale of surrounding lands likely to increase in value. The practical side of the scheme didn't go so well either: by 1910 the amount of cargo was already too great for the new port, and poor access to the rail terminus at Plaza Once made things even worse. Only the 1926 completion of Retiro's Puerto Nuevo solved these problems.

MUSEO FORTABAT

Rivaling Palermo's MALBA museum for cutting-edge looks is this fancy **art museum** (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4310-6600; www.coleccionfortabat.org.ar; Olga Cossettini 141; admission AR$15; 🕒 noon-9pm Tue-Fri, 10am-9pm Sat & Sun). It shows off the collection of multi-millionairess Amalia Lacroze de Fortabat, Argentina's wealthiest woman. The museum's airy salons exhibit works by famous Argentine and international artists – look for Warhol's take on Fortabat herself. Movable aluminum panels above the roof open and close, keeping sun off the glassy ceiling. Call ahead for tours in English.

FRAGATA SARMIENTO

Over 23,000 Argentine naval cadets and officers have trained aboard this 85m **ship** (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4334-9386; Dique No 3; admission AR$2; 🕒 10am-7pm), which sailed around the world 40 times between 1899 and 1938 but never participated in combat. On board are the records of its voyages, nautical items and even the stuffed remains of Lampazo (the ship's pet dog).

RESERVA ECOLÓGICA COSTANERA SUR

The beautifully marshy land of this **nature preserve** (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4893-1588; Av Tristán Achával Rodríguez 1550; 🕒 8am-7pm Tue-Sun) makes it a popular site for weekend outings, when hundreds of picnickers, cyclists and families come for fresh air and natural views. If you're lucky you may spot a river turtle or a coypu; bird-watchers will adore the 200-plus bird species that pause to rest here (for private flora and fauna tours see Seriema Nature Tours, p108). You can rent bikes just outside the park entrance on the weekends (daily in summer).

Congreso

Congreso is an interesting mix of old-time cinemas and theaters, bustling commerce and hard-core politics. The buildings still hold that European aura, but there's more grittiness here than in the Microcentro: it has a more local city feel, with an atmosphere of faded elegance and fewer fancy crowds.

Separating Congreso from the Microcentro is Av 9 de Julio, 'the widest street in the world!,' as proud *porteños* love to boast. While this may be true – it's 16 lanes at its widest – the nearby side streets Cerrito and Carlos Pellegrini make it look even broader. At Avs 9 de Julio and Corrientes lies the city's famous **Obelisco**, 67m high and built in 1936 in only a month; it's the destination of *porteño* sports fans when they have a big win to celebrate.

Plaza Lavalle is surrounded by the austere neoclassical **Escuela Presidente Roca** (1902), the French-style **Palacio de Justicia** (1904) and the landmark **Teatro Colón**. Nearby is the **Templo de la Congregación Israelita**, Argentina's largest synagogue. About 10 blocks south of Plaza Lavalle is the **Palacio del Congreso**, together with its plaza and obligatory monument.

TEATRO COLÓN

Started in 1880 and finished in 1908, the **Teatro Colón** (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4378-7344; www.teatrocolon.org.ar; Cerrito 618) is a major landmark and gorgeous world-class facility for opera, ballet and classical music. It was the southern hemisphere's largest theater until the Sydney Opera House was built in 1973. Opening night featured Verdi's *Aïda,* and visitors have been wowed ever since. Even at times of economic hardship, the elaborate Colón remains a high national priority.

Renovations halted the excellent tours (offered in several languages), but work should have been finished by May 2010 for Argentina's bicentennial celebrations.

PALACIO DEL CONGRESO

Colossal and topped with a green dome, the **Palacio del Congreso** (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4010-3000, ext 2410; Hipólito Yrigoyen 1849) cost more than twice its projected budget and set a precedent for contemporary Argentine public-works projects. It was modeled on the Capitol Building in Washington, DC, and was completed in 1906. Across the way, the **Monumento a los Dos Congresos** honors the congresses of 1810 in BA and 1816 in Tucumán, both of which led to Argentine independence.

Inside the Congreso, free guided tours are given of the **Senado** at 11am and 4pm every weekday except Wednesday; go to the entrance on Hipólito Yrigoyen and be sure to bring photo ID.

PALACIO DE LAS AGUAS CORRIENTES

About six blocks west of Plaza Lavalle, this gorgeous and eclectic Swedish-designed waterworks building (1894) is topped by French-style mansard roofs and covered in 170,000 glazed tiles and 130,000 enameled bricks. If you like quirky museums, check out the small **Museo del Patrimonio** (Map pp84-5; ☎ 6319-1104; cnr Córdoba & Riobamba; admission free; 🕑 9am-1pm Mon-Fri) on the 2nd floor; it's full of pipe fittings, tiles and odd toilets. Guided visits offer a backstage glimpse of the building's inner workings (call for schedules). Bring photo ID and enter via Riobamba.

San Telmo

Full of charm and personality, San Telmo is one of BA's most attractive and historically rich barrios. Narrow cobbled streets and low-story colonial housing retain an old-time feel, though the tourist dollar continues to bring about changes.

Historically, San Telmo is famous for the violent street fighting that took place when British troops, at war with Spain, invaded the city in 1806. British forces advanced up narrow Defensa, but an impromptu militia drove the British back to their ships. The victory gave *porteños* confidence in their ability to stand apart from Spain, even though the city's independence had to wait another three years.

After this San Telmo became a fashionable, classy neighborhood, until in the late 19th century a yellow-fever epidemic hit, driving the rich north into present-day Recoleta. Many older mansions were subdivided and became *conventillos* (tenements) to house poor families. A few years ago these *conventillos* attracted artists and bohemians looking for cheap rent, but these days they're likelier to be filled with fancy shops, new hostels, gay couples or rich expats.

The heart of San Telmo is **Plaza Dorrego**, which hosts a famous Sunday antiques market (see the boxed text, p133). Nearby, the baroque, neocolonial **Iglesia Nuestra Señora de Belén** (Map pp84-5; Humberto Primo 340) was a Jesuit school until 1767, when the Bethlemite order

took it over. Also worth a peek is **Mercado San Telmo**, an old fruit and vegetable market that still functions today; it's located in the center of the block bordered by Estados Unidos, Bolívar, Carlos Calvo and Defensa.

EL ZANJÓN DE GRANADOS

One of the more unique places in Buenos Aires is this amazing **architectural site** (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4361-3002; Defensa 755; 30min/1hr tour AR$25/40; 🕒 tours on the hour from 11am-3pm Mon-Fri, every half hour 1-6pm Sun). Below the remains of a mansion, a series of old tunnels, sewers and water wells going back to 1730 were discovered. They have been meticulously reconstructed brick by brick, and very attractively lit, and this 'museum' offers a fascinating glimpse into the city's architectural past. Choose between hour-long tours during the week or half-hour tours on Sundays. It's best to call and reserve, especially if you need English-speaking guides.

MUSEO HISTÓRICO NACIONAL

This **national historical museum** (Map p91; ☎ 4307-1182; Defensa 1600; admission free; 🕒 11am-6pm) is located at the supposed site of Pedro de Mendoza's original founding of the city in 1536. Major figures of Argentine historical periods, such as San Martín, Rosas and Sarmiento, are represented, along with a few artifacts and paintings. Exhibits are a bit sparse, but the security is great – be prepared to hand over your bag while you look around.

MUSEO PENITENCIARIO

Just off the plaza, this **prison museum** (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4361-0917; Humberto Primo 378; admission AR$2; 🕒 2:30-5:30pm Wed-Fri, 1-7pm Sun) occupies a building that was first a convent, then a women's prison. Don't miss the tear-gas canisters used for riot control, the tennis balls used to hide drugs and the effeminate mannequins sporting past prison fashions. Cool old jail cells, too.

MUSEO DE ARTE MODERNO

Housed in a former tobacco warehouse, this roomy **museum** (Map pp84-5; Av San Juan 350) exhibited the works of contemporary Argentine artists, as well as temporary exhibitions. In 2009 it was closed for major remodeling, with plans to integrate the old cinema museum next door.

MUSEO DEL TRAJE

This small **clothing museum** (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4343-8427; Chile 832; admission free; 🕒 3-7pm Tue-Sun) is always changing its wardrobe. You can hit upon roaring '60s garb, Victorian dresses, vintage hippie wear or matador outfits. Come by and see what hot fashions the dummies are donning when you're in town.

La Boca

Blue collar and raffish to the core, La Boca is very much a locals' neighborhood. In the mid-19th century, La Boca became home to Spanish and Italian immigrants who settled along the Riachuelo, the sinuous river that divides the city from the surrounding province of Buenos Aires. Many came during the booming 1880s and ended up working in the many meat-packing plants and warehouses here, processing and shipping out much of Argentina's vital beef exports. After sprucing up the shipping barges, the port dwellers splashed leftover paint on the corrugated-metal sidings of their own houses – unwittingly giving La Boca what would become one of its claims to fame. Unfortunately, some of the neighborhood's color also comes from the rainbow slick of industrial wastes on the river.

Caminito, near the southern edge of La Boca, is the barrio's most famous street, and on weekends busloads of camera-laden tourists come here for photographs and to browse the small crafts fair while watching tango dancers perform for spare change. A riverside pedestrian walkway offers a close-up sniff of the Riachuelo, while a few museums provide mental stimulation. Four blocks inland is **La Bombonera stadium** (Brandsen), home of the Boca Juniors football team – the former club of disgraced superstar Diego Armando Maradona.

BOCA WARNING

La Boca is not the kind of neighborhood for casual strolls – it can be downright rough in spots. Don't stray far from the riverside walk, El Caminito or La Bombonera stadium, especially while toting expensive cameras. And certainly don't cross the bridge over the Riachuelo. There's nothing you'd really want to see outside the touristy areas, anyway.

FUNDACIÓN PROA

This elegant **art foundation** (Map p91; ☎ 4104-1000; www.proa.org; Av Don Pedro de Mendoza 1929; admission AR$10; 🕒 11am-7pm Tue-Sun) exhibits works by only the most cutting-edge national and international contemporary artists in both traditional and more unusual mediums. Visit the rooftop terrace – the views are excellent and you can grab a meal or drink in the fancy restaurant.

MUSEO DE BELLAS ARTES DE LA BOCA BENITO QUINQUELA MARTÍN

On display at this modern **museum** (Map p91; ☎ 4301-1080; Av Don Pedro de Mendoza 1835; suggested donation AR$5; 🕒 10am-6pm Tue-Fri, 11am-7pm Sat & Sun) are the works of Benito Quinquela Martín, which center on La Boca's port history. There are also paintings by more contemporary Argentine artists, along with a small but excellent collection of painted wood bowsprits (carved statues decorating the front of ships).

OTHER MUSEUMS

High-tech and spiffy, the **Museo de la Pasión Boquense** (Map p91; ☎ 4362-1100; www.museobocquense.com; Brandsen 805; admission AR$20; 🕒 10am-7pm) chronicles La Bombonera stadium, some soccer idols' histories, past highlights (on many videos), the championships, the trophies and, of course, the goooooals. It's located right under the stadium; peek at the pitch for a few extra pesos.

Wax reconstructions of historical figureheads (literally just their heads!) and dioramas of scenes in Argentine history are the specialty of the small and very tacky **Museo Histórico de Cera** (Map p91; ☎ 4301-1497; www.museodecera.com.ar; Del Valle Iberlucea 1261; admission AR$10; 🕒 10am-6pm Mon-Fri, 11am-8pm Sat & Sun). There are also stuffed snakes and creepy wax limbs depicting bite wounds – barely worth the price of admission.

Retiro

Well-located Retiro is one of the ritziest neighborhoods in BA – but it hasn't always been this way. The area was the site of a monastery during the 17th century, and later became the *retiro* (country retreat) of Agustín de Robles, a Spanish governor. Since then, Retiro's current **Plaza Libertador General San Martín** – which sits on a bluff – has played host to a slave market, a military fort and even a bullring. Things are more quiet and exclusive these days.

French landscape architect Carlos (Charles) Thays designed the leafy Plaza San Martín, whose prominent monument is the obligatory equestrian statue of José de San Martín. Surrounding the plaza are several landmark public buildings, such as the **Palacio San Martín**, an art nouveau mansion originally built for the elite Anchorena family and sometimes open to the public; the huge and beautiful **Palacio Paz**; and the 120m-high **Edificio Kavanagh** (1935), once South America's tallest building.

The 76m **Torre de los Ingleses**, across Av del Libertador from Plaza San Martín, was a donation by the city's British community in 1916. Opposite the plaza is the impressive and busy **Retiro train station** (Estación Retiro), built in 1915 when the British controlled the country's railroads. Don't wander behind the station – it's a shantytown.

PALACIO PAZ

This gorgeous **palace** (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4311-1071, ext 147; Santa Fe 750; tours in Spanish AR$18; 🕒 tours 11am & 3pm Tue-Fri, 11am Sat), also called the Círculo Militar, was once the private residence of José C Paz, founder of the still-running newspaper *La Prensa*. Inside are ornate rooms, salons and halls with wood-tiled floors, marble walls and gilded details. Nearly everything was ordered from Europe and assembled here. Tours in English (AR$34) are at 3:30pm Wednesday and Thursday.

MUSEO DE ARMAS

If you're big on weaponry, don't miss this extravagant **museum** (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4311-1071; Santa Fe 702; admission AR$6; 🕒 1-7pm Mon-Fri) showcasing over 2000 bazookas, grenade launchers, machine guns, muskets, pistols, lances and swords – even the gas mask for a combat horse is on display. Don't miss the Japanese suits of armor.

MUSEO DE ARTE HISPANOAMERICANO ISAAC FERNÁNDEZ BLANCO

This neocolonial-era mansion turned **museum** (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4327-0228; Suipacha 1422; admission AR$1, free Thu; 🕒 2-7pm Tue-Fri, 11am-7pm Sat & Sun) holds some gorgeous pieces of silverwork, religious paintings, Jesuit statuary and antiques. There's been no effort to place items in any historical context, but everything is in great condition, and an attractive garden provides a peaceful sanctuary. Call ahead for tours in English, German or French.

TEATRO NACIONAL CERVANTES & MUSEO NACIONAL DEL TEATRO

Six blocks west of Plaza San Martín, you can't help but notice the lavishly ornamented **Teatro Cervantes** (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4815-8883; www.teatrocervantes.gov.ar; Av Córdoba 1155). The landmark building dates from 1921 and holds a historical theater with a grand tiled lobby and plush red-velvet chairs. Enjoy the elegance – however faded – with a tour (call for current schedule).

Exhibits at the tiny, low-key **Museo Nacional del Teatro** (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4815-8883, ext 156; cnr Córdoba & Libertad; admission free; 🕒 10am-6pm Mon-Fri) trace the history of Argentine theater from its colonial beginnings. Check out the gaucho suit worn by Carlos Gardel and the *bandoneón* that once belonged to Paquita Bernardo, Argentina's first musician to play this accordion-like instrument.

Recoleta & Barrio Norte

BA's wealthiest citizens live and breathe in Recoleta, the city's most exclusive and fashionable neighborhood. In the 1870s many upper-class *porteños* relocated here from San Telmo during a yellow-fever epidemic. Today you can best see the wealth of this sumptuous quarter on **Av Alvear**, where many of the old mansions (and newer international boutiques) are located.

Full of lush parks, classy museums and French architecture, Recoleta is best known for its **Cementerio de la Recoleta**. Next door to the cemetery, the 1732 **Iglesia Nuestra Señora del Pilar** is a baroque colonial church with a small **museum** (donation AR$4; 🕒 10:30am-6:15pm Mon-Sat, 2:30-6:15pm Sun) to the left and upstairs, while just in front the **Plaza Intendente Alvear** hosts the city's most popular *feria artesanal* (crafts fair; see the boxed text, p133). A little further north is the sinuous sculptural flower **Floralis Genérica**, whose giant metal petals close up at night – if all the gears are working, that is.

CEMENTERIO DE LA RECOLETA

Wander for hours in this amazing **cemetery** (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4803-1594; cnr Junín & Guido; admission free; 🕒 7am-6pm) where 'streets' are lined with impressive statues and marble sarcophagi. Crypts hold the remains of the city's elite: past presidents, military heroes, influential politicians and the rich and famous. Hunt down Evita's grave, and bring your camera – there are some great photo ops here. Tours in English are available at 11am on Tuesday and Thursday (call to confirm). For a great map and information, order Robert Wright's PDF map at www.recoletacemetery.com.

MUSEO NACIONAL DE BELLAS ARTES

Arguably Argentina's top **fine-arts museum** (Map pp84-5; ☎ 5288-9900; www.mnba.org.ar; Av del Libertador 1473; admission free; 🕒 12:30-8:30pm Tue-Fri, 9:30am-8:30pm Sat & Sun) is a must-see for art lovers. It showcases works by Renoir, Monet, Gauguin, Cézanne and Picasso, along with many classic Argentine artists such as Xul Solar and Edwardo Sívori. There are also temporary exhibits, a small gift shop and a cinema.

MUSEO XUL SOLAR

Xul Solar was a painter, inventor and poet, and this **museum** (Map pp88-9; ☎ 4824-3302; www.xulsolar.org.ar; Laprida 1212; admission AR$10; 🕒 noon-8pm Tue-Fri, to 7pm Sat, closed Jan) highlights over 80 of his bizarre, surreal and even cartoonish paintings; the guy was in a class by himself.

Palermo

Palermo is heaven on earth for BA's middle class. Its large, grassy parks – regally punctuated with grand monuments – are popular destinations on weekends, when families fill the shady lanes, cycle the bike paths and paddle on the peaceful lakes. Many important museums and elegant embassies are also located here, and certain subneighborhoods of Palermo have become some of the city's hottest destinations for shopping and nightlife.

Palermo's green spaces haven't always been for the masses. The area around **Parque 3 de Febrero** (Map pp88–9) was originally the 19th-century dictator Juan Manuel de Rosas' private retreat and became public parkland after his fall from power. Within these green spaces you'll find the **Jardín Japonés** (Map pp88-9; ☎ 4804-4922; www.jardinjapones.org.ar; cnr Avs Casares & Berro; admission Mon-Fri AR$5, Sat & Sun AR$8; 🕒 10am-6pm, to 7pm Sat & Sun), a peaceful paradise with koi ponds, teahouse and cultural offerings; the surprisingly decent **Jardín Zoológico** (see p102), BA's main zoo; and the nearby **Jardín Botánico Carlos Thays**, which will appeal to both botanists and cat lovers (it's full of feral felines). There's also the **Planetario Galileo Galilei** (Map pp88-9; ☎ 4771-9393; www.planetario.gov.ar; cnr Avs Sarmiento & Belisario Roldán), a planetarium with shows throughout the week and summer telescope viewings. Just south of the zoo is the landmark of **Plaza Italia**, Palermo's main transport hub.

PALERMO VIEJO

Roughly bounded by Av Santa Fe, Scalabrini Ortiz, Av Córdoba and Dorrego is trendsetting **Palermo Viejo** (Map pp88-9). It's further divided into Palermo Hollywood (north of the train tracks) and Palermo Soho (south of the tracks), both full of beautiful old buildings, leafy sidewalks and cobbled streets. Dozens of ethnic, ultramodern restaurants cater to anyone yearning for Japanese, Vietnamese, Greek or even Norwegian food, though modern international cuisine tops the list (see p119). There are also great guesthouses, bars and clubs; hanging out in **Plaza Serrano** on any weekend night is a blast. And the shopping! Buenos Aires' most cutting-edge designers have opened up dozens of boutiques here, and there are also many fancy housewares stores and other fun themed shops. You can wander around for hours and even days in this exciting area.

One of the capital's most trendsetting areas is **Palermo Viejo** (see the boxed text, above), with fine shopping, dining and nightlife. Another popular but much smaller Palermo neighborhood, **Las Cañitas**, is further north. Many restaurants and other nightspots here attract hordes of hip folk at night, when Av Báez clogs with traffic. Southeast of Las Cañitas is the landmark **Centro Islámico Rey Fahd** (☎ 4899-0201; www.ccislamicoreyfahd.org.ar; Av Int Bullrich 55), built by Saudis on land donated by former president Carlos Menem. Tours in Spanish are offered on Tuesday and Thursday at noon (call to confirm, and dress conservatively).

Even if you're devoutly Catholic, you'll find **Tierra Santa** (Map pp88-9; ☎ 4784-9551; www.tierrasanta-bsas.com.ar; Av Costanera R Obligado 5790; admission AR$25; 🕒 call for hours) a very tacky place. The 'world's first religious theme park' boasts animatronic dioramas including of Adam and Eve and the Last Supper, but its pièce de résistance is a giant Jesus rising from a fake mountain – aka, the resurrection (every half hour).

MUSEO DE ARTE LATINOAMERICANO DE BUENOS AIRES (MALBA)

Sparkling inside its glass walls, this airy **modern arts museum** (Map pp88-9; ☎ 4808-6511; www.malba.org.ar; Av Figueroa Alcorta 3415; admission AR$15, Wed AR$5; 🕒 noon-8pm Thu-Mon, to 9pm Wed) is BA's fanciest. Art patron Eduardo Costantini displays his limited but fine collection, which includes work by Argentines Xul Solar and Antonio Berni, plus some pieces by Mexicans Diego Rivera and Frida Kahlo. A cinema screens art-house films, and there's an excellent cafe for watching the beautiful people.

JARDÍN ZOOLÓGICO

Artificial lakes, pleasant walking paths and over 350 species of animals entertain the crowds at this relatively good **zoo** (Map pp88-9; ☎ 4011-9900; www.zoobuenosaires.com.ar; cnr Avs Las Heras & Sarmiento; admission AR$12-22; 🕒 10am-6pm Tue-Sun Oct-Mar, to 5pm Apr-Sep). Most of the enclosures offer decent spaces, and some buildings are impressive in themselves – check out the elephant house. An aquarium, a monkey island, a petting zoo and a large aviary are other highlights.

MUSEO NACIONAL DE ARTE DECORATIVO

Located in the stunning beaux-arts mansion called Palacio Errázuriz (1911), this **museum** (Map pp88-9; ☎ 4802-6606; www.mnad.org; Av del Libertador 1902; admission from AR$5; 🕒 2-7pm Tue-Sun) displays the posh belongings of Chilean aristocrat Matías Errázuriz. Everything from Renaissance religious paintings and porcelain dishes to Italian sculptures and artwork by El Greco and Rodin can be admired. The outside cafe in front is a fine place to refresh yourself on a sunny day. Admission prices vary according to the exhibition on show.

MUSEO EVITA

Everybody who is anybody in Argentina has their own museum, and Eva Perón is no exception. You can see her immortalized in **Museo Evita** (Map pp88-9; ☎ 4807-9433; Lafinur 2988; local/foreigner AR$4/14; 🕒 11am-7pm Tue-Sun) through videos, historical photos, books, old posters and newspaper headlines – even her fingerprints are recorded. The prize memorabilia, however, would have to be her wardrobe: dresses, shoes, handbags, hats and blouses stand proudly behind shining glass, forever pressed and pristine.

MUSEO DE ARTE POPULAR JOSÉ HERNÁNDEZ

This modest-sized **museum** (Map pp88-9; ☎ 4803-2384; Av del Libertador 2373; admission AR$3, Wed & Sat AR$1, Sun free; 🕒 1-7pm Wed-Fri, 10am-8pm Sat & Sun)

has permanent exhibitions on Mapuche crafts, such as exquisite ponchos and (at the opposite end of the spectrum) gaudy Carnaval costumes. Diverse changing exhibitions range from folk crafts to modern toys.

Belgrano

Bustling Av Cabildo, the racing heartbeat of Belgrano, is an overwhelming jumble of noise and neon; it's a two-way street of clothing, shoe and housewares shops that does its part to support the mass consumerism of *porteños*. For a bit more peace and quiet step away from the avenue, where Belgrano becomes a leafy barrio of museums, parks and good eateries.

Only a block east of Av Cabildo, **Plaza Belgrano** (Map pp82–3) is the site of a modest but fun weekend market (see the boxed text, p133). Near the plaza stands the Italianate **Iglesia de la Inmaculada Concepción**, a church popularly known as 'La Redonda' because of its impressive dome.

Just across the plaza is the **Museo de Arte Español Enrique Larreta** (Map pp82-3; ☎ 4784-4040; Juramento 2291; admission AR$1; 🕒 2-8pm Mon -Fri, 10am-8pm Sat & Sun), which displays the well-known novelist's gorgeous art collection. Also close by is the **Museo Histórico Sarmiento** (Map pp82-3; ☎ 4782-2354; Juramento 2180; admission AR$5, Thu free; 🕒 1-6pm Mon-Fri, 2-6pm Sat & Sun), which displays the memorabilia of Domingo F Sarmiento, one of Argentina's most famous, forward-thinking presidents.

About five blocks north, the **Museo Casa de Yrurtia** (Map pp82-3; ☎ 4781-0385; O'Higgins 2390; admission AR$5; 🕒 3-7pm Tue-Fri, 1-7pm Sun) honors the well-known Argentine sculptor Rogelio Yrurtia. His old house and garden is full of his large sculptures and other artists' works; look for Picasso's *Rue Cortot, Paris*.

Four blocks northeast of Plaza Belgrano, French landscape architect Carlos Thays took advantage of the contours of **Barrancas de Belgrano** (Map pp88–9) to create an attractive, wooded public space on one of the few natural hillocks in the city. On Sunday evenings the bandstand is host to a *milonga* (tango dance school; see boxed text, p125).

Across Juramento (and the train tracks) from the Barrancas, Belgrano's small **Chinatown** (Map pp88–9) takes up a few blocks, offering decent Chinese restaurants (mostly closed on Monday) and cheap goods.

Once & Around

BA's most ethnically colorful neighborhood is Once, with sizable groups of Jews, Peruvians and Koreans. The cheap market around Once train station (Map pp82–3) always bustles, with vendors selling their goods on sidewalks and crowds everywhere, making it a fun spot to wander around. The nearby **Museo Casa Carlos Gardel** (Map pp88-9; ☎ 4964-2071; Jean Jaurés 735; admission AR$1; 🕒 11am-6pm Mon & Wed-Fri, 10am-7pm Sat & Sun) offers tango fans some insight into the dance's most famous singer.

For high-class shopping, wander through **Mercado de Abasto** shopping mall (see p133); it has especially good kids' entertainment. West of Once is Caballito, a calm residential neighborhood. Here you'll find the **Museo Argentino de Ciencias Naturales** (Map pp88-9; ☎ 4982-6595; Ángel Gallardo 490; admission AR$3; 🕒 2-7pm), a good natural-science museum that's definitely worth a peek for its musty taxidermy and cool skeleton room.

ACTIVITIES

The extensive greenery in Palermo provides good areas for recreation, especially on weekends when the ring road around the rose garden is closed to motor vehicles. Recoleta has grassy parks also, if you can avoid the dog piles. Best of all is the Reserva Ecológica Costanera Sur (p97), an ecological paradise just east of Puerto Madero; it's excellent for walks, runs, bike rides and even a bit of wildlife viewing.

Cycling

Bike paths interlace Palermo's Parque 3 de Febrero (Map pp88–9), where rental bikes are available in good weather; look for them on Av de la Infanta Isabel on weekends in winter and daily in summer. The Reserva Ecológica Costanera Sur (see p97) also has bike rentals with a similar schedule.

For safe family cycling, head to Nuevo Circuito KDT in Palermo's **Parque General Belgrano** (Map pp88-9; ☎ 4807-7700; Salguero 3450; admission AR$3). Here, **Sprint Haupt** (☎ 4807-6141; Salguero 3450; 🕒 Tue-Sun) rents bicycles for use around a plain 1200m concrete bike path (RSVP and bring your passport). Nearby there's a rather run-down, banked velodrome, but you'll have to bring your own specialized bicycle. They're both under the overpass and over the pedestrian bridge.

For information on bike tours, see p107.

Horseback Riding

If you want to get out of town for a few hours and hop on a horse, forget those touristy *estancias* (ranches) and check out **Caballos a la Par** (☎ 011-15-5248-3592; www.caballos-alapar.com). Guided rides are given in a provincial park about an hour's drive from Buenos Aires. Services are professional and equipment of high quality; moonlight rides available.

Swimming

Some upscale hotels have decent-sized pools, but they charge hefty prices for nonguests to swim and use their facilities – if they allow them. It's better to find a health club with an indoor pool (see right). Otherwise there's Palermo's **Club de Amigos** (Map pp88-9; ☎ 4801-1213; www.clubdeamigos.org.ar; Figueroa Alcorta 3885; admission AR$20, pool extra), which has a pool open December to February. Call for public swimming times.

Golf & Tennis

Benos Aires' most convenient golf course is the 18-hole **Campo Municipal de Golf** (Map pp88-9; ☎ 4772-7261; Av Tornquist 1426; 🕑 Tue-Sun, sometimes open Mon). Practice your long shots at the **Costa Salguero Driving Range** (Map pp88-9; ☎ 4805-4732; cnr Avs Costanera & Salguero), which also has a golf store, a cafe and a 9-hole, family-friendly course.

There are eight clay tennis courts available for casual hire at **Parque General Belgrano** (Map pp88-9; ☎ 4807-7879; Salguero 3450; admission AR$3); rates are AR$20 to AR$25 per hour. Try to reserve 48 hours in advance; bring your own equipment. **Club de Amigos** (Map pp88-9; ☎ 4801-1213; www.clubdeamigos.org.ar; Figueroa Alcorta 3885; admission AR$20, court hire AR$66-76) also has tennis courts.

THE SPA LIFE

Scrub that dead skin off – you've earned it. Other than the places listed here, several hotels also have spa services, including the **Four Seasons** (p113), the **Palacio Duhau – Park Hyatt** (p113) and **Home Hotel** (p115).

Aqua Vita Spa (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4812-5989; www.aquavitamedicalspa.com; Arenales 1965)
Espacio Oxivital (Map pp88-9; ☎ 4775-0010; www.espacioxivital.com.ar; Nicaragua 4959)
Evian Spa (Map pp88-9; ☎ 4807-4688; www.aguaclubspa.com; Cerviño 3626)

Health Clubs

Some gyms may require a medical checkup before using their services.

The king of BA's gyms is **Megatlon** (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4322-7884; www.megatlon.com; Reconquista 335; day/week/month AR$82.50/180/330), with about 15 branches throughout the city. Expect decent gym services, including many classes; some have an indoor pool. Hours vary depending on the branch. Other gyms include **Le Parc** (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4311-9191; www.leparc.com; San Martín 645; day-use fee AR$80), **Sport Club Cecchina** (Map pp84-5; ☎ 5199-1212; www.sportclub.com.ar; Bartolomé Mitre 1625; day-use fee AR$40) and **YMCA** (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4311-4785; www.ymca.org.ar; Reconquista 439; day-use fee AR$35).

Yoga & Pilates

Most gyms and some cultural centers schedule yoga and Pilates classes. Even some health-oriented restaurants, such as Arte Sano (see p116) or Natural Deli (p119) offer yoga, tai chi and/or meditation. There are significant discounts for weekly or monthly class packages.

YOGA IN THE PARK?

And now for something completely different – **Eco Yoga Park** (☎ 4901-0744; 011-15-6507-0577; http://ecoyogapark.blogspot.com), located about 1½ hours west of Buenos Aires, near Lújan.

Run by friendly Hare Krishnas, this pretty countryside retreat comes complete with grassy lawns, ecologically built *cabañas* (some made of cob), organic vegetable garden, yoga studio, art shop and meditation hall shaped like a giant beehive. The tiny restaurant serves vegetarian meals, much of it from the garden, and easy yoga classes are offered daily. **Accommodations** (incl meals AR$110, with 4 hours of volunteering AR$60) are all in rustic but comfortable hostel-type bunks with shared facilities. Other than doing perhaps some volunteer work and taking part in the yoga and meditation activities, there's not much to do except relax.

All religious denominations are welcome. There are just a few rules: no alcoholic drinks, drugs, smoking or meat-eating allowed on premises.

Buena Onda Yoga (☎ 011-15-5423-7103; www.buenaondayoga.com; per class AR$40) Taught by several American women expats at several locations around BA. Private classes are available.

Centro Valletierra (Map pp88-9; ☎ 4833-6724; www.valletierra.com; Costa Rica 4562; per class AR$50) This slick Palermo Viejo studio has Hatha, Iyengar and Ashtanga yoga classes plus meditation.

Tamara Di Tella Pilates (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4813-1216; www.tamaraditella.com; cnr Juncal & R Peña) The 'Pilates Queen' has over a dozen branches with modern facilities.

Vida Natural (Map pp88-9; ☎ 4826-1695; www.vidanatural.com.ar; Charcas 2852; per class AR$40) This natural-therapy center in Palermo offers Ashtanga, Hatha and Iyengar yoga. Therapeutic massage and harmonizing Tibetan bowls also available.

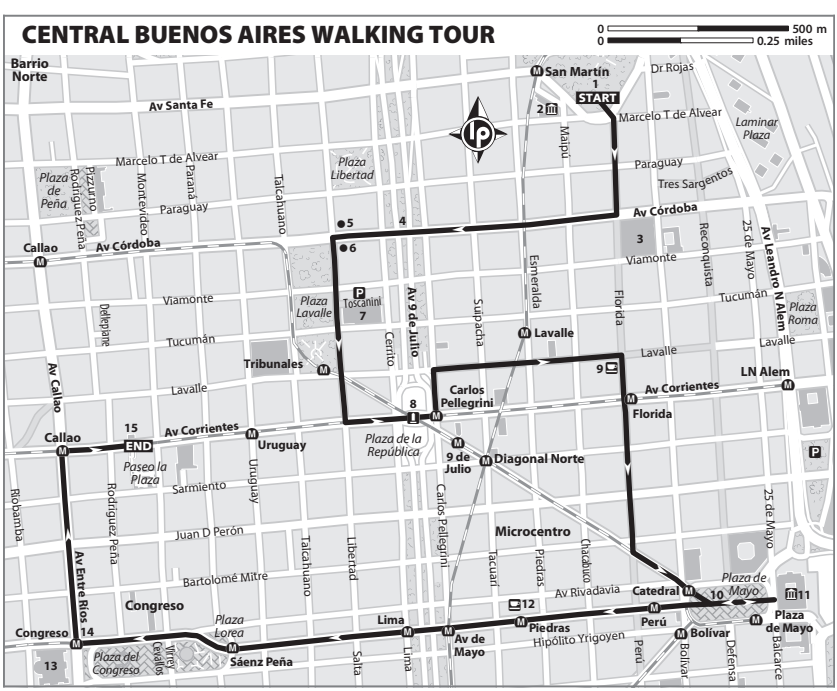
WALKING TOUR

Start at leafy **Plaza San Martín** (**1**; p100), designed by French landscape architect Carlos Thays. If you like guns, swords and cannons, stop in at the **Museo de Armas** (**2**; p100). Otherwise, head down pedestrian Florida to the elegant **Galerías Pacífico** (**3**; p95), one of the capital's most beautiful malls. Take a peek inside at the ceiling murals, or watch one of the pass-the-hat tango shows that are often just outside.

From here head west on Córdoba, crossing the impressive **Av 9 de Julio** (**4**). Soon you'll come to the lovely **Teatro Cervantes** (**5**; p101) and the notable **Templo de la Congregación Israelita** (**6**). Walk south along Libertad to the **Teatro Colón** (**7**; p98), one of BA's most impressive buildings; take a tour if you've got time. Then keep going south and turn left at Av Corrientes. You'll soon bisect Av 9 de Julio again, but under the shadow of BA's famous 67m **Obelisco** (**8**). Just after you cross, turn left at Carlos Pellegrini and then right at pedestrian Lavalle; keep going until the junction at Florida.

WALK FACTS

Start: Plaza San Martín
End: Heladería Cadore
Distance: 5km
Duration: about four hours, depending on breaks



If you need a break, stop at the classic cafe **Richmond** (**9**; p122) – the old atmosphere can't be beat. After your *café con leche* (coffee with milk), keep buzzing south on Florida and then down Diagonal Roque Sáenz Peña to **Plaza de Mayo** (**10**; p96). Tour the **Casa Rosada** (**11**; p96), then head west on Av de Mayo past **Café Tortoni** (**12**; p124), the city's most famous and touristy cafe, to the **Palacio del Congreso** (**13**; p98). Note the rococo **Confitería del Molino** (**14**), a now-defunct cafe that presently molders in BA's air. For a special treat, walk north four blocks and one block west to **Heladería Cadore** (**15**; p120) for a delicious ice-cream cone.

COURSES

Visitors have many opportunities to study almost anything in BA, from Spanish to cooking to tango (see the boxed text, p125). Most cultural centers (p92) offer a wide variety of classes at affordable rates.

Language

BA is a major destination for students of Spanish, and good institutes are opening up all the time. Nearly all organize social activities and home-stay programs, and all have private classes. Below are just a few institutes; it's always best to ask around for current recommendations.

For something different, contact **Español Andando** (☎ 5278-9886; www.espanol-andando.com). You'll walk around town with a guide, learning Spanish by interacting with *porteños* on the street. Or try **Spanglish** (www.spanglishexchange.com), set up like speed dating; you'll speak five minutes in English and five in Spanish, then switch partners.

DWS (Map pp88-9; ☎ 4777-6515; www.danielawasser.com.ar; Av Córdoba 4382) Friendly and has free internet computers.

Expanish (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4322-0011; www.expanish.com; Viamonte 927, 1st fl, suites A & B) Housed in a lovely building; offers good services.

IBL (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4331-4250; www.ibl.com.ar; Florida 165, 3rd fl) Very central and offers eight levels of Spanish instruction.

One on One (Map pp84-5; ☎ 3528-4452; www.oneononeargentina.com.ar; Rodríguez Peña 617, 4th fl) Small school with tailor-made courses; several languages taught.

University de Buenos Aires (UBA; Map pp84-5; ☎ 4343-5981; www.idiomas.filo.uba.ar; 25 de Mayo 221) Regular and intensive, long-term classes (one to four months). Italian, German, French, Portuguese and Japanese also taught. Cheap, but classrooms are run-down.

Verbum (Map pp88-9; ☎ 4861-7571; www.verbum.biz; Salguero 553) Also offers trainee and internship programs for those who want to remain in Argentina.

VOS (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4812-1140; www.vosbuenosaires.com; Marcelo T de Alvear 1459) Very welcoming institute located just outside Recoleta.

Cooking

Those proficient in Spanish and seeking long-term cooking classes can try the highly regarded **Instituto Argentino de Gastronomía** (IAG; Map pp84-5; ☎ 5032-1414; www.iag.com.ar; Montevideo 968) or **Mausi Sebess** (☎ 4791-4355; www.mausisebess.com; Av Maipú 594, Vicente López).

Taking cooking classes in a small group or privately are probably the best options for short-term visitors who don't speak Spanish. There are several options in BA, a few with expat chefs who have their own 'closed door' restaurant (see p117).

A Little Saigon (☎ 011-15-6056-8823; www.alittlesaigon.com) Chef Thuy Lam will instruct you on how to make authentic Vietnamese cuisine from old family recipes.

Cooking with Teresita (☎ 011-15-4293-5992; www.try2cook.com) Learn to cook cuisine from Argentina and other South American countries.

Dan Perlman (www.saltshaker.net/class-schedule) Ex-New Yorker Dan Perlman teaches Italian, Mediterranean, Asian and vegetarian classes.

Norma Soued (☎ 011-15-4470-2267; www.argentinecooking.blogspot.com) Will teach you to make typical Argentine cuisine such as empanadas and traditional stews.

Samuel Warde (☎ 011-15-5740-9267; www.wynnwoods.com/classes) Customized cooking classes by a feisty ex-Texan. All kinds of cuisine, including vegan and raw food.

BUENOS AIRES FOR CHILDREN

Those with kids have it good in BA. On weekends Palermo's parks bustle with families taking walks or picnicking. Shopping malls fill with strollers, while zoos, museums and theme parks also make good child-friendly destinations.

Good green spots in the city include Palermo's **Parque 3 de Febrero** (Map pp88–9), where on weekends traffic isn't allowed on the ring road around the rose garden (and you can rent bikes, boats and in-line skates nearby). Other good stops here include a planetarium (p101), a zoo (p102) and a Japanese garden (p101). If you're downtown and need a nature break, think about the Reserva Ecológica Costanera Sur (p97), a large nature preserve with good bird-watching, pleasant gravel paths and no vehicular traffic.

Shopping malls make safe destinations for families (especially if it's raining), and most come with a playground, a video arcade, a multiplex and toy shops. **Paseo Alcorta** (Map pp88-9; ☎ 5777-6500; Salguero 3172) is particularly good, while the Abasto (p133) boasts a full-blown children's museum (actually a fancy playground) and a mini-amusement park.

In San Telmo, check out the puppet museum, **Museo Argentino del Títere** (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4304-4376; Piedras 905; admission free; 🕒 3-6pm Tue-Sun), which has inexpensive weekend shows (call for schedule) that will amuse the little urchins.

In Recoleta visit the **Museo Participativo de Ciencias** (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4806-3456; www.mpc.org.ar; Junín 1930; admission AR$15; 🕒 3:30-7:30pm), in the Centro Cultural Recoleta (p92). This hands-on science museum has interactive displays that focus on fun learning. Hours vary widely depending on the season; check during your tenure. A bit outside the center, in Caballito, is the good Museo Argentino de Ciencias Naturales (natural science museum; p103).

Heading to Tigre (p137), north of the city, makes a great day excursion. Get there via the Tren de la Costa; it ends right at Parque de la Costa, a typical amusement park with fun rides and activities. Take a boat trip on the delta or wander the market for fruit and housewares.

Outside the city is the exceptional zoo, **Parque Temaikén** (☎ 03488-436-900; www.temaiken.com.ar; RP 25, Km 1, Escobar; adult/child 3-10 AR$48/35; 🕒 10am-7pm Tue-Sun Dec–mid-Mar, to 6pm mid-Mar–Dec). Only the most charming animal species are on display (think meerkats, pygmy hippos and white tigers), roaming freely around natural enclosures. An excellent aquarium comes with touch pools, and plenty of interactive areas provide mental stimulation. Taxis from the center cost around AR$120 and take 40 minutes, or grab bus 60 marked 'Escobar' from Plaza Italia.

To help calm down temper tantrums, visit one of BA's dozens of ice-cream shops; see the boxed text, p120, for suggestions.

For more particulars on traveling with children in Argentina, see p599.

TOURS

There are plenty of organized tours, from the large tourist-bus variety to more intimate car trips to guided bike rides to straight-up walks. Other than the following listings, there are also travel agencies (p94), most of which broker tours or offer their own.

The City of Buenos Aires organizes **free monthly tours** (☎ 4114-5791; www.bue.gov.ar) from August to December, with themes ranging from art to historic bars to particular neighborhoods. Stop by any government tourist office (p94) for a schedule.

If you have an MP3 player and are self-sufficient, check out www.mptours.com. You can download unique self-guided tours and maps of BA neighborhoods for US$12.50 each, walking, stopping and listening at your leisure. The city also has audio tours (www.bue.gov.ar/audioguia) and they're free by calling a number on your cell phone.

All companies listed below offer tours in English and possibly other languages; some companies listed under 'Group Tours' also do private tours.

Group Tours

Anda Responsible Travel (☎ 3221-0833; www.andatravel.com.ar; Agüero 1131, 1st floor; per person from AR$40) Most notable for its La Boca tour, which gets travelers involved with local organizations working towards improving the lives of its citizens.

BA Free Tour (☎ 011-15-6395-3000; www.bafreetour.com) Free (well, donation) morning and afternoon walking tours given by enthusiastic young guides who love their city. Even if you can't give anything you're welcome to join.

BA Walking Tours (☎ 5773-1001; www.ba-walking-tours.com; per person AR$100) Various kinds of city walking tours with historical, cultural, political and architectural perspectives.

Buenos Aires Bus (☎ 5239-5160; www.buenosairesbus.com; ticket AR$50) Hop-on, hop-off topless bus with a dozen stops. Runs every 30 minutes at designated stops (see website).

Cultour (☎ 011-15-6575-4593; www.cultour.com.ar; per person from AR$55) Good tours run by teachers and students from UBA (University of Buenos Aires). Prepare to learn the historical and cultural facets of Buenos Aires.

Eternautas (☎ 5031-9916; www.eternautas.com; tour prices vary) An interesting range of tours given by historians. Some have economic, religious or cultural themes. Walking tours (in Spanish) are from AR$10 per person.

Graffitimundo (☎ 011-15-3683-3219; www.graffitimundo.com; per person AR$75) Expat-run tours of some of BA's best graffiti, by those in the know. Learn artists' history and the local culture of graffiti (and stencil art too).

La Bicicleta Naranja (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4362-1104; www.labicicletanaranja.com.ar; Pasaje Giuffra 308; tours AR$105, bike rental per hr AR$10) Offers various bike tours around the city; tour price includes helmet, lock and guide.

Urban Biking (☎ 4568-4321; www.urbanbiking.com) Offers similar services to La Bicicleta Naranja.

Private Tours

BA Local (☎ 011-15-4870-5506; www.balocal.com; tours from AR$450) Christina Wiseman, an ex–New Yorker, specializes in personal shopping tours and off-the-beaten-path (or regular city) tours.
Bitch Tours (☎ 011-15-6157-3248; www.bitchtours.blogspot.com; tours from AR$380) Agustina Menendey is actually not a bitch, and she will give off-beat custom tours for the right (cool) people.
Bob Frassinetti (☎ 011-15-6965-1955; admin@frassinetti.com) Bohemian Bob can take you to art galleries, studios, secondhand shops and markets – plus hunting for arts and antiques around Argentina.
Buenos Tours (☎ 011-15-3221-1048; www.buenostours.com; tours from AR$380) Arranges well-run city tours guided by friendly, knowledgeable and responsible local expats.
Seriema Nature Tours (☎ 4312-6345; www.seriematours.com) It does nature tours to all South America, but around BA the most popular outings are to Costanera Sur and Reserva Natural Otamendi. It also has a two-day 'Birding of the Pampas' tour.
Sylvia Zapiola (☎ 4822-1187, 011-15-3555-3639; tours from AR$300) Feisty Argentine and professional guide who has lived abroad; does general city orientation tours and special services such as airport pickup.

FESTIVALS & EVENTS

There are festivals happening in BA all the time, and they celebrate nearly everything imaginable – including tango, horses, gauchos, cinema, art, wine, fashion and books. Spring is when the lion's share of these events occur. Check with tourist offices for exact dates as they vary from year to year. Palermo's **La Rural** (aka Predio Ferial; Map pp88-9; Av Santa Fe) is the venue for many of the city's bigger events.

January & February

Carnaval (late February) Get sprayed with foam while enjoying Afro-Latin *murga* (musical theater) rhythms on Av de Mayo. BA's Carnaval is relatively tame, but there's still a chance for water-balloon fights.
Chinese New Year (date depends on the lunar calendar) Head to Belgrano's tiny Chinatown for food, firecrackers and festivities.

April

Feria del Libro (www.el-libro.org.ar; La Rural) The largest book festival in Latin America, attracting over a million book lovers for three weeks (April to May).
Festival International de Cine Independiente (www.bafici.gov.ar) Highlights national and international independent films at venues all around town.

June & July

arteBA (www.arteba.com; La Rural) Popular event highlighting contemporary art, introducing exciting new young artists, and showing off top gallery works.
Exposición Rural (www.exposicionrural.com.ar; La Rural) The mother of all livestock fairs, with lots of bull(s). Late July to early August.

August

Fashion BA (www.bafweek.com) Spots the city's latest designer threads and hottest models. A fall collection shows in February or March; both events are at La Rural.
Festival y Mundial de Tango (www.mundialdetango.gov.ar; various venues) Masterful tango performances, tango movies, classes, workshops, conferences and competitions in venues all over the city.

September

Vinos y Bodegas (www.expovinosybodegas.com.ar; La Rural) A can't-miss event for wine aficionados, offering vintages from over 100 Argentine *bodegas* (wineries).
Casa Foa (www.casafoa.com) The city's top-notch architecture, design and decoration fair, located at a different renovated (and usually historical) building each year. Runs September to October.
South American Music Conference (www.samc.net) BA's biggest electronic music party, featuring networking conferences during the day and 50,000 party-goers at night.

November

Marcha del Orgullo Gay (www.marchadelorgullo.org.ar) Thousands of BA's gay, lesbian and transgender citizens proudly march from Plaza de Mayo to the Congreso.
Gran Premio Nacional The country's biggest horse race and a fine family event, held in Palermo's opulent and French-styled *hipódromo*.
Día de la Tradición Held in San Antonio de Areco (see p146), but a worthwhile day trip if you like gauchos.

December

Campeonato Abierto de Pato (www.fedpato.com.ar) Showcases Argentina's quirky traditional sport involving horseback riders wrestling over a handled ball.
Campeonato Abierto de Polo (☎ 4343-0972; www.aapolo.com) Watch the world's best polo players thunder up and down Palermo's polo fields.
Creamfields (www.creamfieldsba.com) BA's answer to the UK's outdoor, all-night, cutting-edge electronic-music and dance party, with over 100 international DJs and bands.
Festival Buenos Aires Danza Contemporánea (www.buenosairesdanza.com.ar) A major contemporary dance party that occurs every two years. Performances, seminars and workshops happen in various cultural centers and theaters.

SLEEPING

Over the last few years Buenos Aires has seen its accommodation options increase exponentially. Boutique hotels and guesthouses, especially, have mushroomed in neighborhoods such as San Telmo and Palermo, and hostels are a dime a dozen. You shouldn't have trouble finding the type of place you're looking for, but it's still a good idea to make a reservation beforehand – especially during any holidays or the busy summer months of November through January.

Many places will help you with transportation to and from the airport if you reserve ahead of time. The most expensive hotels will take credit cards, but cheaper places might not (or may include a surcharge for credit-card payment). Some kind of breakfast, whether it be continental or buffet, is included nearly everywhere; the same goes for internet access, wi-fi and air-con.

At Hostelling International (HI) hostels, buying a membership card (AR$60) gives a discount off listed prices. Another hostel club is www.minihostels.com. For top-end hotels, we've listed rack rates; look at their websites for significantly reduced rates.

Prices below are for high season (roughly November to February). Rates can skyrocket during peak seasons (Christmas and Easter) or drop during slow seasons.

For a list of apartment-rental websites, see below.

Microcentro

As well as being very central, the Microcentro has the best range and the largest number of accommodations in the city. Toward the north you'll be close to the popular pedestrian streets of Florida and Lavalle, as well as the neighborhoods of upmarket Retiro and Recoleta. The Plaza de Mayo area contains the bustling banking district and many historical buildings, and is within walking distance of San Telmo. During the day the whole area is very busy, but nights are much calmer as businesspeople flee the center after work. Don't expect creative cuisine in this area – for that you'll have to head to Palermo.

BUDGET

our pick Portal del Sur (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4342-8788; www.portaldelsurba.com.ar; Hipólito Yrigoyen 855; dm AR$40-50, s/d AR$160/180;) Located in a charming

SHORT- & LONG-TERM RENTALS

Any hotel, hostel or guesthouse should significantly discount a long-term stay, so negotiate a deal in advance. There are also many guesthouses that specialize in weekly or monthly stays, and these offer a more intimate experience. If you're interested in spending time with a host family, check out www.coret.com.ar. To rent a room in a house, check out www.sparerooms.com.ar.

Traditionally you need a local's lien to help you cover rent for an apartment, but so many long-term foreigners have poured into BA that a plethora of rental agencies and websites have popped up to help them find housing without this requirement. Expect to pay a much higher monthly rate for this service, however; locals usually commit to at least one year when obtaining a lease for unfurnished apartments, and consequently pay less. Sites to check:

www.adelsur.com
www.alojargentina.com.ar
www.apartmentsba.com
www.barts.com.ar
www.buenosaireshabitat.com
www.friendlyapartments.com (gay oriented)
www.oasisba.com
www.roomargentina.com
www.stayinbuenosaires.com
www.tucasargentina.com
www.yourhomeinargentina.com.ar

If you'd like someone to check out an apartment before you rent it, Madi Lang at www.bacul turalconcierge.com can make sure the place isn't on a busy street, outlying neighborhood or near a construction site.

old building, this is one of the city's best hostels. Beautiful dorms and sumptuous, hotel-quality private rooms surround a central open area, which features a kitchen and dining area. The highlight is the lovely rooftop deck with views and attached airy, common lounge. Has free tango lessons, Spanish lessons and walking tour.

HI Obelisco Suites (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4328-4040; www.hihostels.com; Av Corrientes 830; dm AR$45, s/d AR$100/140; ✕ 💻 📶) This apartment-like HI hostel features large dorms (four to eight beds) and pleasant private rooms; every three rooms share a bathroom and a kitchenette. Common areas include a trendy bar-lounge with a pool table, and separate small rooms for Spanish classes and watching TV. Lots of activities are on offer as are occasional free dinners.

Milhouse Youth Hostel (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4345-9604; www.milhousehostel.com; Hipólito Yrigoyen 959; dm/d AR$48/210; ✕ 💻 📶) Best known as BA's premiere party hostel, this popular HI spot offers a plethora of activities and services. Dorms and private rooms are tiny but fairly well kept, and most surround a pleasant open patio. Common spaces are large and boisterous, and include a bar in the basement, a TV lounge on the mezzanine and a rooftop terrace above. There's a gorgeous annex building nearby.

Hotel Alcázar (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4345-0926; Av de Mayo 935; s AR$120-150, d AR$150-170; 💻 📶) One of BA's best budget deals, the old Alcázar now has simple remodeled rooms (get one with an outside window) that are mostly small, but clean and good value. It's centrally located and just steps away from the famous Tortoni Cafe, which is handy since breakfast isn't included. There are also some nice interior tiled patios. Reserve ahead.

MIDRANGE & TOP END

Suipacha Inn (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4322-0099; www.hotelsuipacha.com.ar; Suipacha 515; s AR$180, d AR$200-240; ✕) This well-located hotel is a good deal in the Microcentro – it's only a couple of blocks from the Obelisco. It could use a facelift, but you do get small, basic and tidy rooms, most with a fridge, a microwave, a sink and a safe box. Treat yourself and upgrade to a more spacious 'special' room, as they don't cost too much more.

Hotel Frossard (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4322-1811; www.hotelfrossard.com.ar; Tucumán 686; s/d AR$200/230; ✕ 💻 📶) This intimate hotel is a little gem, boasting 24 high-ceilinged rooms of different sizes in a charming older building. Singles are tiny and doubles are small, but triples have more breathing room. The location is excellent; the pedestrian streets of Florida and Lavalle are just a block away.

Moreno Hotel (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4334-3638; www.morenobuenosaires.com; Moreno 376; r AR$750; ✕ 💻 📶) Located in an atmospheric historical building is this otherwise modern, minimalist hotel. The rooms are beautiful – some are huge and come with a loft. The best part is the 6th-floor rooftop terrace; there's also a contemporary restaurant. You can opt to make your stay carbon-neutral by 'donating' AR$12 per night (don't worry – it gets paid even if you don't).

Tryp Hotel (Sol Meliá; Map pp84-5; ☎ 5222-9600; www.solmelia.com; San Martín 474; d AR$830; ✕ 💻 📶) A good modern and upscale choice in the center, the Tryp (aka Sol Meliá) is a large hotel on the cutting edge of hip. On offer are large, contemporary rooms in cool earthy colors, featuring flat-panel TVs, glass desks and large elegant headboards framing comfortable beds. Business travelers should note the meeting room with attached rooftop deck.

NH City & Tower (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4121-6464; www.nh-hotels.com; Bolívar 160; d AR$950; ✕ 💻 📶 🚭) The NH chain's signature style is hip minimalism, with muted earth tones and natural design accents. Expect classy, tasteful rooms and excellent services – this particular hotel has a small but beautiful rooftop swimming pool with city views. Prices can vary at the several other NH branches in town.

Congreso

Congreso and Tribunales contain many of the city's older theaters, cinemas and cultural centers. Lively Av Corrientes has many modest shops, services and bookstores. The Plaza de Congreso area is always moving, sometimes with mostly peaceful public demonstrations. Generally, this area is not quite as packed as the Microcentro and has a less business and touristy flavor, but still bustles day and night.

BUDGET

Sabatico Hostel (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4381-1138; www.sabaticohostel.com.ar; Mexico 1410; dm AR$40-45, r AR$120-170; ✕ 💻 📶) Located off the tourist-beaten path in an atmospheric neighborhood is this exceptional, well-maintained hostel. Rooms are small but pleasant and the great common

areas include a nice kitchen, airy patio hall and wonderful rooftop terrace with soaking pool. There's occasional live music on weekends.

Kilca Hostel (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4381-1966; www.kilcabackpacker.com; Mexico 1545; dm AR$46, s/d AR$115/145; 🖳 📶) The slightly artsy Kilca is in the Montserrat neighborhood, which is cool – fewer tourists and more local activity. It has a laid-back atmosphere and is located in an early 1900s house with rooms that feature exposed brick and high ceilings with beams. There's a funky kitchen and small leafy courtyards that are good for relaxing.

Hotel Sportsman (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4381-8021; www.hotelsportsman.com.ar; Av Rivadavia 1425; s/d from AR$50/80) For a taste of how backpacker lodgings in BA used to be, check into this oldie but goodie. It's a classic, ancient hotel with creaky wood staircase, an old iron elevator and mazelike hallways leading to basic but decent rooms with either shared or private bathrooms. Character abounds, and there's a kitchen – but only for heating up water. No breakfast, but it's still an awesome deal.

El Jardín del Tango (☎ 4952-9329; http://sites.google.com/site/jardindeltango; s/d from AR$135/170) Tango aficionado and expat Rachel Stevenson runs three guesthouses in Buenos Aires' colorful and very local Once neighborhood, just west of Congreso. All have just one or two rooms or apartments available and are homey and comfortable. Rachel's own place, Casa Rosa, comes with her two cats. Reservations essential.

Hotel Reina (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4381-2496; www.reinahotel.com; Av de Mayo 1120; s AR$120-150, d AR$150-200; ❄) This charming old building still has a subdued elegance that's apparent in the grand halls, the classic elevator and the original light fixtures. Some rooms are simple, while others are lovely – with high ceilings, wood floors and balconies (try for the 2nd floor). Tango classes can be given in the airy salon; breakfast is good.

MIDRANGE & TOP END

Yira Yira Guesthouse (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4812-4077; www.yirayira.com.ar; Uruguay 911 1B; s/d/tr AR$133/190/228; 🖳 📶) Run by the helpful Paz, who lives onsite, is this intimate apartment with four large rooms facing the central living area. It's a good place to meet other travelers and very well located, smack in the center of the downtown neighborhoods. Two-night minimum stay and RSVP required.

Fiamingo Apart Hotel (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4374-4400; www.fiamingoapart.com.ar; Talcahuano 120; s/d AR$205/245; ❄ 🖳 📶) Great for families, the Fiamingo features huge suites that lean more toward comfortable and convenient than fancy. All come with attached kitchenettes (there are no stoves – just microwaves and sinks). Staff are friendly, and windows are double-paned for peace and quiet. It's a great deal for the price; reserve ahead of time.

Hotel Bonito (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4381-2162; www.bonitobuenosaires.com; Chile 1507, 3rd fl; r AR$266-418; ❄ 🖳 📶) Lovely boutique hotel with just five artsy, gorgeous rooms mixing the traditional and contemporary. Some have a loft, cupola sitting area or Jacuzzi; floors can be wood or acid-finished concrete. Warm atmosphere, with small bar area and good breakfast.

Design Suites (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4814-8700; www.designsuites.com; MT de Alvear 1683; r AR$684-990; ❄ 🖳 📶) Futuristically elegant, with that minimalist style so popular in trendy BA hotels these days, Design Suites offers a great location and exclusive atmosphere. All suites have flat-panel TVs, gorgeous decor and small kitchenettes (no stoves, just microwaves). The downstairs lounge is elegant; too bad you can't dip into the pool.

San Telmo & Around

South of the Microcentro, San Telmo has some of the most traditional atmosphere in Buenos Aires. Buildings are more charming and historical than those in the center, and tend to be only a few stories high. Many restaurants and fancy boutique stores have opened here in recent years, and there are some good bars, tango venues and other nightspots for entertainment. Most accommodation options here are hostels, humble hotels or upscale guesthouses rather than five-star hotels.

BUDGET

Garden House (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4305-0517; www.gardenhouseba.com.ar; San Juan 1271; dm AR$36-40, s & d AR$125-170; 🖳 📶) A bit off the beaten tourist path is this friendly hostel with two dorms (four and eight beds) and six doubles (a couple with pretty patios) and some casual but cozy common spaces. Most rooms share bathrooms. It's a bit far from the center, but the good vibes are worth the trek. Cheap but excellent Thursday-night *asados* (barbecues) take place on the terrace.

Art Factory (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4343-1463; www.artfactoryba.com.ar; Piedras 545; dm AR$38, s AR$105-125, d AR$120-170;) Friendly and uniquely art-themed, this fine hostel offers more private rooms than most – and all feature huge murals, painted and decorated by different artists from around the world. Even the hallways and water tanks have colorful cartoonish themes, and the 1850s mansion adds an elegant old touch to the atmosphere. Large rooftop terrace and bar-lounge area.

Sandanzas Hostel (Map p91; ☎ 4300-7375; www.sandanzas.com.ar; Balcarce 1351; dm AR$40-45, d AR$140-180;) This friendly hostel has just 28 beds and is enthusiastically run by its five young owners, all artists or social workers. It's a colorful place with good-sized dorms, six doubles (three with bathroom) and occasional cultural events. The location is in a gritty blue-collar neighborhood near Plaza Lezama. Free tango classes and bike rentals.

Brisas del Mar (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4300-0040; Humberto Primo 826; s AR$60-70, d AR$70-80) Long-running old cheapie hotel with no luxuries – except for cable TV. Has basic but decent budget rooms, some even musty, and downstairs ones share outside bathrooms. Upstairs rooms are brighter; all face tiled hallways lined with plants.

MIDRANGE & TOP END

Lugar Gay (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4300-4747; www.lugargay.com.ar; Defensa 1120; dm AR$95-133, s AR$152-228, d AR$190-304;) This intimate guesthouse is for gay men only, offering eight small but elegant rooms – half with shared bathrooms and most featuring stunning views of the pretty church in back. It's a maze of catwalks, spiral staircases and sunny terraces (nude sunbathing welcome), plus a tango salon, a tiny cafe and a closet kitchenette. Two Jacuzzis – one indoor, one outside – translate into fun nights.

Casa Bolivar (Map p91; ☎ 4300-3619; www.casabolivar.com; Bolívar 1701; r AR$373-612;) Fourteen spacious studios and loft apartments have been lovingly renovated into attractive and modern spaces at this amazing mansion, some with incredible original details such as carved doorways or painted ceilings. Separate entrances join with common hallways connecting through the complex, and there are lovely garden patios in which to relax.

Mansion Dandi Royal (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4307-7623; www.hotelmansiondandiroyal.com; Piedras 922; s AR$368, d AR$506-620;) Catering mainly to tango fanatics, this 1903 family mansion has been renovated into a luxurious themed hotel complete with murals, glass chandeliers and a curved wooden staircase. The 29 rooms are gorgeous; most come with antique furniture, claw-foot tubs and high ceilings. There's a small but lovely rooftop pool and a sunny patio, while tango classes, *milongas* and shows take place in the wonderful wood-floored basement studios or next-door salon.

Axel Hotel (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4136-9393; www.axelhotels.com; Venezuela 649; r AR$1135-1965;) BA's first five-star gay hotel is certainly a showpiece from the bottom up – the lobby boasts a multistory wall fountain and a peek at the top-floor swimming pool. Stairways are also glassy and rooms are fabulously contemporary, with acid-concrete floors. There's a large back garden with another (outdoor) pool, two bar-lounges, a restaurant, saunas, Jacuzzis and a gym. Sunday pool parties in summer; DJ parties on Fridays. Make sure to check its website – prices vary.

Retiro

Retiro is a great, central place to be, *if* you can afford it – many of BA's most expensive hotels, along with some of its richest inhabitants, are settled here. Close by are leafy Plaza San Martín, the Retiro bus station and many upscale stores and business services. Recoleta and the Microcentro are just a short stroll away.

MIDRANGE & TOP END

Hotel Central Córdoba (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4311-1175; www.hotelcentralcordoba.com.ar; San Martín 1021; s AR$150, d AR$170-200;) Possibly Retiro's most affordable hotel is the Central Córdoba. Rooms are neat and feature desk areas and tiled floors, but don't leave much space to move around. Ask for an inside room if you want quiet. The location is spot on – some key bars are within easy staggering distance – and it's very popular, so book well ahead.

Dazzler Suites Arroyo (Map pp84-5; ☎ 5276-7700; www.dazzlersuitesarroyo.com; Suipacha 1359; d from AR$340;) Contemporary in a minimalist way, this hotel sits in a good location close to Recoleta. There's a snazzy lobby area with patio beyond and to the side. Rooms are comfortably modern and all come with kitchenette; some have two bedrooms. Perks include an open-air swimming pool, gym and international restaurant; the breakfast is good.

Aspen Suites (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4313-9011; www.aspensuites.com.ar; Esmeralda 933; d from AR$425; ✕ 🖳 ᯤ) This six-story building is hardly luxurious – the halls could use a lick of paint and views out the window vary – but the modern, spacious suites all have fully equipped kitchenettes and dining areas. Bigger 'deluxe' suites and one-bedroom apartments are also available; good for families.

Hotel Bel Air (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4816-0016; www.hotelbelair.com.ar; Arenales 1462; r from AR$460; ✕ 🖳 ᯤ) The lobby bar here is downright sensuous, and the nearby lounge has upscale travelers and business folks sitting pretty. Upstairs, rooms are nicely designed in warm colors and have modern furnishings, though they're not super luxurious. Great location between the Retiro and Recoleta.

Four Seasons (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4321-1200; www.fourseasons.com/buenosaires; Posadas 1086; d from AR$2415; ✕ 🖳 ᯤ 🏊) No surprise here – the Four Seasons offers all the perks that define a five-star hotel, such as great service and white terry-cloth robes. Rooms are large and beautiful, with contemporary furnishings and decorations, and the finest suites (AR$4600 to AR$36,800!) are located in an old luxurious mansion next door. There's also a gorgeous spa and an outdoor heated swimming pool.

Recoleta & Barrio Norte

Most of the accommodations in Recoleta (Barrio Norte is more of a subneighborhood) are expensive, and what cheap hotels there are tend to be full much of the time. Buildings here are grand and beautiful, befitting the city's richest barrio, and you'll be close to Recoleta's famous cemetery, along with its lovely parks, museums and boutiques.

BUDGET & MIDRANGE

Southernhouse Hostel (Map pp88-9; ☎ 4961-6933; www.southernhouseba.com; TM de Anchorena 1117; dm AR$40, s AR$100, d AR$140-160; ✕ 🖳 ᯤ) This maze-like hostel is rather ho-hum, with small dorms (though each has its own bathroom). There are a dozen private rooms and a tiled outside patio, but the highlight here is its location, between Palermo, Recoleta and Once.

Recoleta Hostel (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4812-4419; www.hirecoleta.com.ar; Libertad 12116; dm AR$40-48, r AR$138-165; ✕ 🖳 ᯤ) Long-running hostel in an awesome location. Hardly intimate, though, and a bit rough around the edges despite it being an HI hostel. Segregated dorms (four to 10 beds), seven private rooms, tiny kitchen and sunny rooftop terrace. Lots of stairs, so be in shape. Strangely, Friday and Saturday rates can be higher.

Hotel Lion D'or (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4803-8992; www.hotel-liondor.com.ar; Pacheco de Melo 2019; s AR$150-180, d AR$190-250; ✕ ᯤ) These digs have their charm (it's an old embassy), but rooms vary widely – some are small, basic and dark, while others are absolutely grand and may include a (non-working) fireplace. All are clean and good value, and while a few are a bit rough around the edges, most have been modernized for comfort. There's a great old marble staircase, and the elevator is just fabulous. No breakfast; some rooms share bathrooms.

TOP END

Art Hotel (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4821-4744; www.arthotel.com.ar; Azcuénaga 1268; s AR$285, d AR$360-740; ✕ 🖳 ᯤ) Stunningly beautiful, this boutique hotel features a small covered patio with an interesting wall of mirrors and a wonderful rooftop terrace with a Jacuzzi and a wood deck. Rooms (some small) boast a contemporary mix of decor – think concrete floors, plasma TVs and ironwork details – along with romantic canopied beds and original high doors.

Onze Trendy Hotel (Map pp88-9; ☎ 4821-2873; www.onzehotelboutique.com; Ecuador 1644; d AR$380-570; ✕ 🖳 ᯤ) With a name like this, how can you resist? Gorgeous from the get-go, this boutique hotel offers 11 rooms with unique touches such as dressing rooms and traditional *mantas* (hand-woven blankets) for decoration. Try for upstairs rooms; they're more interesting, and some rooms have balconies. It's a lovely place with great service and an exclusive feel.

Marseille des Anges (Map pp84-5; ☎ 5219-2526; www.marseilledesanges.com; Arenales 1392; s/d AR$395/482; ✕ 🖳 ᯤ) A great choice and well-located in snazzy Recoleta. Rooms are large and comfortable, and the best come with balcony or front-facing window. All have great bathrooms with cutting-edge multispray showers. The overall feel here is friendly and intimate, and the atmosphere traditional with modern comforts.

Palacio Duhau – Park Hyatt (Map pp84-5; ☎ 5171-1234; www.buenosaires.park.hyatt.com; Av Alvear 1661; d from AR$3015; ✕ 🖳 ᯤ 🏊) One of the loveliest five-star hotels in BA, the Park Hyatt consists of two wings – a newer building on Av Posadas and the renovated Palacio Duhau.

In between is a gorgeously terraced grassy garden with fountains and patios, overlooked by the palace's large restaurant balcony. Rooms are luxuriously wonderful, and swanky amenities include a fine spa, an indoor pool, a wine and cheese bar, an art gallery and even a teahouse.

Palermo

Despite being about a 10-minute taxi ride from the center, Palermo is the top choice for many travelers. Not only is it full of extensive parklands – which are great for weekend jaunts and sporting activities – but you'll have heaps of cutting-edge restaurants, designer boutiques and hip dance clubs at your fingertips. Many of these places are located in the extensive subneighborhood of Palermo Viejo (p102). All are connected to the center by bus or Subte.

BUDGET

Palermo House Hostel (Map pp88-9; ☎ 4832-1815; www.palermohouse.com.ar; Thames 1754; dm AR$38-50, d AR$133-152; ✖ 💻 📶) It's a bit of an odd layout, with reception on the 3rd floor – but this is where everyone hangs out anyway. It's one big room, with a whole bank of windows making it bright and welcoming – and the metal deck makes a very welcome addition. Good dorms and private rooms with high ceilings are down one floor.

Hostel Suites Palermo (Map pp88-9; ☎ 4773-0806; www.hostelsuites.com; Charcas 4752; dm/d AR$49/195; ✖ 💻 📶) One of the more pleasant large cheapies in town is this HI hostel in a fine old mansion and former geriatric home. Maybe this explains why it's not a party place, but a rather peaceful spot with good, large dorms and 11 small, private rooms. There's a rooftop terrace for hanging out, and lots of events on offer.

Kapaké Hostel (Map pp88-9; ☎ 4773-1150; www.kapake.com.ar; Paraguay 5570; dm AR$57-76, s/d AR$170/266; ✖ 💻 📶) Wonderful, slightly upscale hostel on the edge of Palermo Hollywood and just 1½ blocks from a Subte stop. Common spaces have a great feel and modern amenities (think flat-screen TV), with nice patio and roof terrace areas for *asados*. Reserve private rooms in advance; there are only two. Intimate and secure.

our pick Zentrum Hostel Boutique (Map pp88-9; ☎ 4833-9518; www.zentrumhostel.com.ar; Costa Rica 4520; dm AR$57, r AR$266-323; ✖ 📶) The Zentrum is more like a small boutique hotel – there are only three private rooms, plus one that has bunks for six people. There's no kitchen, but the wood deck upstairs is awesome, and the location right on Plaza Palermo Viejo can't be beat.

MIDRANGE

Gorriti 4290 (Map pp88-9; ☎ 4862-8300; www.gorriti4290.com.ar; Gorriti 4290; d AR$190-304; ✖ 💻 📶) For an intimate stay, seek out this small, friendly spot. There are only four rooms (three with shared bathrooms) and all are simple yet comfortable, with quality beds and linens. The common area is interesting – there's a catwalk above the dining room, and sunny rooftop patio. The owners live on-site; good breakfast.

Kala Petit Hotel (Map pp88-9; ☎ 4773-1331; www.kalapetithotel.com; Thames 1263; d from AR$228; ✖ 💻 📶 🚭) Family-run, it's a great midrange deal in Palermo, especially because there's a small garden with pool and *asado* area in back – plus a nice kitchen available for guests. Rooms are simple but pleasant, and most share bathroom. In an old house, with good breakfast.

Palermo Viejo B&B (Map pp88-9; ☎ 4629-4773; www.palermoviejobb.com; Niceto Vega 4629; s AR$285, d AR$323-437; ✖ 💻 📶) Small B&B in a remodeled *casa chorizo* – a long, narrow house. The six rooms all front an outdoor hallway and are simple but quite comfortable; two have lofts. All come with fridge and good breakfast.

TOP END

Craft Hotel (Map pp88-9; ☎ 4833-0060; www.crafthotel.com; Nicaragua 4583; r AR$506-690; ✖ 💻 📶) Contemporary hotel with clean lines and artsy recycled touches; the stairs are made from old colorful wood panels. Rooms have Scandinavian aesthetics and come with flat-screen TVs, MP3 docks, cement floors, showers (yes – often *in* the room!) and sometimes balconies. This hotel's best feature, however, has to be the rooftop lounge area. Free bike rental.

our pick Miravida Soho (Map pp88-9; ☎ 4774-6433; www.miravidasoho.com; Darregueyra 2050; r from AR$508; ✖ 💻 📶) Run by a helpful Canadian, this lovely guesthouse comes with six beautifully remodeled, elegant rooms. All are very comfortable, and one has a private terrace and chandelier over the bathtub. There's a wine

cellar, table-and-bar area for the evening wine tastings, small relaxing patio and it even has an elevator. It serves an American-style breakfast.

248 Finisterra (Map pp88-9; ☎ 4773-0901; www.248finisterra.com; Av Báez 248; r from AR$574; ✕ 🖳 📶) Smack in the middle of Las Cañitas' nightlife lies this elegant, Zenlike boutique hotel. There are four classes of minimalist rooms, with most being good sized and all beautifully contemporary. Best of all is the rooftop terrace, with wood lounges and a Jacuzzi. Service is attentive, and security good.

Home Hotel (Map pp88-9; ☎ 4778-1008; www.homebuenosaires.com; Honduras 5860; r from AR$598; ✕ 🖳 📶 🚭) Sleek with Scandinavian designs, Home is a friendly, intimate little paradise of a hotel. Rooms come beautifully decorated with simple, modern lines and vintage wallpaper accents. The highlight is in the back, however; here you'll find an excellent bar and a grassy garden with a glorious pool. The basement spa is icing on the cake.

Vain Boutique Hotel (Map pp88-9; ☎ 4774-8246; www.vainuniverse.com; Thames 2226; r from AR$637; ✕ 🖳 📶) Located in a lovely renovated building, the Vain typifies the new Palermo Viejo style of boutique minimalism. The 15 rooms here have been tastefully done up along contemporary lines – black headboards, white bedspreads and simple furnishings. All have high ceilings and wood floors, and you get a welcome drink on arrival.

EATING

Eating out in Buenos Aires makes for a gastronomical highlight. Not only are the typical *parrillas* (steak houses) a dime a dozen, but the city's Palermo Viejo neighborhood boasts the most varied ethnic cuisine in the country. You can find Armenian, Brazilian, Mexican, Indian, Japanese, Southeast Asian and Middle Eastern cuisines – and even fusions of several. Most are acceptable and some are exceptional.

Microcentro eateries tend to cater to the business crowd, while nearby Puerto Madero is full of elegant and pricey restaurants. Congreso is pretty traditional, cuisine-wise, except for its 'little Spain' neighborhood. Recoleta is another expensive neighborhood with touristy dining options on Roberto M Ortiz (near the cemetery). San Telmo keeps attracting more and more worthwhile restaurants.

Reservations are usually unnecessary except at the most popular restaurants – or if it's the weekend. The most thorough online guide to BA restaurants is www.guiaoleo.com, in Spanish; for English there's www.saltshaker.net.

Microcentro

Parrilla al Carbón (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4328-0824; Lavalle 663; mains AR$11-32; ⏲ lunch & dinner) Cheap *parrilla* doesn't come easier than this. Go for a quick *choripan* (sausage sandwich; AR$6) at the counter in front of the grill. For more comfort and a better view of the TV, snag one of the few crowded tables and order a half-portion of the *vacío* (a chewy but tasty flank cut).

California Burrito Company (CBC; Map pp84-5; ☎ 4328-3057; Lavalle 441; mains AR$22-36; ⏲ 8:30am-11pm Mon-Fri) At this modern Mexican joint, flour tortillas are loaded up with your choice of meat, rice, beans and salsa, and rolled into large San Francisco–style burritos the likes of which BA has never before seen. Tacos and salads are lighter options, and the house margaritas are a nice touch. It's also in Palermo at Godoy Cruz 1781 (Map pp88–9).

Broccolino (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4322-7754; Esmeralda 776; mains AR$24-45; ⏲ lunch & dinner) Pick from over 25 sauces (including squid ink!) for your pasta, with a choice of rigatoni, fusilli, pappardelle and all sorts of stuffed varieties. If you can't decide on your topper, try the delicious Sicilian sauce (spicy red peppers, tomato and garlic) or the pesto with mushrooms and garlic. Portions are large and the bread homemade.

Granix (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4343-4020; Florida 165, 1st fl; all-you-can-eat AR$35; ⏲ lunch Mon-Fri) Stepping into this large, modern lacto-ovo-vegetarian eatery will make you wonder if *porteños* have had enough steak already. Pick from the many hot appetizers and mains; there's also a great salad bar and plenty of desserts. It's only open for weekday lunches, and located in a shopping mall. Takeout is available.

Puerto Madero

Fresh Market (Map pp84-5; ☎ 5775-0335; cnr Villaflor & Olga Cossettini; mains AR$45-52; ⏲ breakfast, lunch & dinner) It's not on the water, but a sidewalk table does just fine at this upscale cafe-restaurant. Choose from stir-fried veggies, grilled salmon or broccoli ravioli with garlic sauce, and sit pretty with Puerto Madero's wealthy residents. There's a luscious dessert case inside, so be sure to take a peek.

MEATLESS IN BUENOS AIRES

Argentine cuisine is internationally famous for its succulent grilled meats, but this doesn't mean vegetarians – or even vegans – are completely out of luck.

Most restaurants, including *parrillas,* serve a few items acceptable to most vegetarians, such as green salads, omelettes, pizza and pasta. Key words to beware of include *carne* (beef), *pollo* (chicken), *cerdo* (pork) and *cordero* (lamb). S*in carne* means 'without meat,' and the phrase *soy vegetariano/a* (I'm a vegetarian) will come in handy when explaining to an Argentine why in the world you don't want to tuck into a prime *bife de chorizo* (sirloin).

Luckily for nonmeat-eaters, vegetarian restaurants have become somewhat trendy in Buenos Aires recently. For cafeteria-style places close to the Microcentro there's **Granix** (p115), **Lotos** (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4814-4552; Córdoba 1577; mains AR$10-17; ☉ 11:30am-6pm Mon-Fri, 11:30am-4pm Sat) and **Arte Sano** (Map pp88-9; ☎ 4963-1513; Lucio Mansilla 2740; mains AR$15-21; ☉ 8am-10pm Mon-Fri, 9am-8pm Sat). **Pura Vida** (p118) has nutritious juice combinations plus a few veggie snacks.

The Palermo Viejo area has more upscale options, including **Bio** (p120), **Meraviglia** (p119) and **Artemesia** (Map pp88-9; ☎ 4863-4242; José Antonio Cabrera 3877; mains AR$25-40; ☉ dinner Tue-Sat). **Krishna** (p119) is a long-running hippie-Indian spot with good options.

There are many more vegetarian places in BA, plus many Indian restaurants. For a list, check out www.happycow.net – but be aware their BA section includes some places that have closed.

Siga la Vaca (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4315-6801; Av Alicia Moreau de Justo 1714; lunch AR$49-61, dinner AR$61-62; ☉ lunch & dinner) Only the truly hungry should set foot in this excellent all-you-can-stuff *parrilla*. Work your way from the appetizer salad bar to the grill, where the meat hangs out. Eat slowly and pace yourself, and you'll only need to eat once that day. One drink and a dessert are included in the price, which varies depending on the meal and day.

Rodizio (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4334-3638; Av Alicia Moreau de Justo 838; all-you-can-eat AR$130; ☉ lunch & dinner) Pure heaven for meat lovers is this Brazilian-style *churrasquería* (all-you-can-eat restaurant). You don't even have to queue up – just sit pretty at your table and knife-wielding waiters come by to slice chunks of meat off long spits, right onto your plate. The cuts vary, so be choosy and pace yourself. An extensive appetizer-salad buffet, along with one dessert and a coffee, are included in the price.

Congreso

Pizzería Güerrín (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4371-8141; Av Corrientes 1368; slices AR$3-4.50; ☉ 11am-2am) Just point at a prebaked slice behind the glass counter and eat standing up with the rest of the guys. To be more civilized, sit down and order your pizza freshly baked – this way you'll also get to choose from a greater variety of toppings. Empanadas and plenty of desserts are also available.

Cervantes II (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4372-5227; Juan D Perón 1883; mains AR$19-38; ☉ lunch & dinner) It's a modern and unpretentious spot with a touch of old-world atmosphere. Locals order an *agua de sifón* (soda water) to go along with the *bife de chorizo* (sirloin) or *ravioles con tuco* (ravioli with sauce). Short orders such as *milanesas* (breaded steaks) and omelettes are also available. Portions are large and the service is efficient.

our pick **Chan Chan** (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4382-8492; Hipólito Yrigoyen 1390; mains AR$22-33; ☉ lunch & dinner Tue-Sun) A welcome newcomer to Congreso's dining scene is this very popular and artsy Peruvian joint. Dishes range from duck to rabbit to lamb (don't worry – no guinea pig), plus of course their delicious mixed ceviches and plenty of seafood choices. Try the *chicha morron* – a tasty corn-based fruity drink. Reasonable prices and good service mean there's often a wait.

Chiquilín (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4373-5163; Sarmiento 1599; mains AR$28-45; ☉ lunch & dinner) Going strong for over 80 years, Chiquilín is a large and comfortable restaurant with a classic atmosphere that adds a bit of personality (think ham legs hanging from the ceiling). The best food here is the *parrilla* and the pasta, though there is also seafood, omelettes and specialty salads, along with plenty of desserts.

San Telmo & Constitución

Bar El Federal (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4300-4313; cnr Perú & Carlos Calvo; snacks AR$15-30; ☉ 8am-2am) This historic bar with classic atmosphere dates from 1864; check out the amazing counter area. The spe-

cialties here are sandwiches (especially turkey breast) and *picadas* (shared appetizer plates), but there are also pastas, salads and desserts. Sidewalk tables are the perfect perch for you to watch San Telmo go by.

Bar Plaza Dorrego (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4361-0141; Defensa 1098; mains AR$20-39; 🕒 8am-2am Sun-Thu, to 3am Fri & Sat) You can't beat the atmosphere at this traditional joint; sip your *cortado* (coffee with milk) by a picture window and watch the world pass by. Meanwhile, traditionally suited waiters, tango music and scribbled graffiti on the counters take you back in time – at least until your hamburger lands on the table. Sitting at a sidewalk table is another experience in itself.

Parrilla 1880 (Map p91; ☎ 4307-2746; Defensa 1665; mains AR$20-45; 🕒 lunch & dinner Tue-Sun) A good, solid *parrilla* away from the more touristy sections of San Telmo. The atmosphere is thick with history and locals come here to enjoy juicy cuts of meat from the open grill in front. The half portion of *bife de chorizo* is plenty big for one person. Lots of other dishes such as pastas, omelettes and salads are also available.

Gran Parrilla del Plata (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4300-8858; Chile 594; mains AR$21-36; 🕒 lunch & dinner) There's nothing too fancy at this traditional *parrilla* – just old-time atmosphere and generous portions of good grilled meats at decent prices. There are also pastas for that vegetarian who gets dragged along. The cowhide-covered chairs are a great touch; this place a local favorite.

Mash (Map pp84-5; ☎ 011-15-5507-0572; Mexico 518; mains AR$25-37; 🕒 dinner Tue-Sat) Run by a rather eccentric gay Brit and his Argentine partner (who both ran eateries across Europe) is this cozy restaurant-bar in San Telmo. The menu is small, but the dishes exotic and tasty; they range from Tandoori chicken to fajitas to Thai green curry to lamb rogan josh.

Café San Juan (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4300-1112; Av San Juan 450; mains AR$35-50; 🕒 lunch & dinner Tue-Sun) Some of San Telmo's best international cuisine can be found at this family-run restaurant. The pork *bandiola* is deliciously tender, and the crushed-almond shrimp is a real treat – but everything is good. This is a great spot to try seafood; it's brought in daily from Patagonia.

Casal de Catalunya (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4361-0191; Chacabuco 863; mains AR$45-70; 🕒 lunch Tue-Sat, dinner daily) Unsurprisingly big on seafood, this excellent Catalan restaurant offers garlic shrimp, mussels and clams in tomato sauce and fish of the day with *aioli* (garlic mayonnaise). Other typical Spanish dishes include *jamón serrano* (*prosciutto*-like ham), seafood paella and suckling pig. Don't miss the luscious *crema Catalana* for dessert.

La Boca

El Samovar de Rasputín (Map p91; ☎ 4302-3190; De Valle Iberlucea 1251; mains AR$15-22; 🕒 10am-8pm Tue-Sun) On warm summer days choose the street seating at this atmospheric old joint, with great tourist-watching opportunities. The food is nothing new – basic pasta, sandwiches, *milanesas*

THE SECRET'S OUT

A Buenos Aires culinary offshoot that has been getting a bit of press lately is the so-called 'closed-door restaurant' scene, or *puertas cerradas*. These restaurants are only open a few days per week, are pricey prix fixe and you have to ring a bell to enter. Most won't even tell you the address until you make reservations (mandatory, of course). But if you want that spine-tingling feeling brought on by discovering something off the beaten path – or just like being part of an exclusive group – these places are for you.

We'll let you in on the secret with a few starting points. At **Casa Saltshaker** (www.casasaltshaker.com) you'll be dining in chef and sommelier Dan Perlman's actual apartment in Barrio Norte. Vegetarians shouldn't miss **Casa Felix** (www.diegofelix.com), which serves a fish-based menu but does vegetarian or vegan dishes on request. Wine lovers will love **Casa Coupage** (www.casacoupage.com.ar), run by two friendly Argentine sommeliers in their beautiful home. And for something exotic there's **Cocina Sunae** (http://cocinasunae.blogspot.com), which serves up very tasty (and at times spicy) pan-Asian food.

All are great for meeting fellow diners, since tables are usually communal and the atmosphere intimate. And there are many more not listed here; do a little search and enjoy discovering BA's 'underground' dining scene!

and *parrilla* – but there's good live rock and blues at 10pm (see p127).

Il Matterello (Map p91; ☎ 4307-0529; Martín Rodríguez 517; mains AR$25-40; ⏲ lunch Tue-Sun, dinner Tue-Sat) The food is exceptional at this Genovese trattoria. Try the *lasagne bolognese* or the *tagliatelle alla rucola* (tagliatelle with arugula). For a special treat, the house *tortelli verde* (small pasta pillows stuffed with cheese and garlic) is hard to beat.

Retiro

Filo (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4311-0312; San Martín 975; mains AR$25-46; ⏲ lunch & dinner) Your choice is likely to be excellent at this artsy restaurant, as it does a great job cooking up the 20 varieties of pizza and 15 kinds of salads (try the smoked salmon). Other tasty choices include *panini,* pasta and meats, along with a whirlwind of desserts.

Al Carbón (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4312-5604; Reconquista 875; mains AR$32-44; ⏲ lunch & dinner Mon-Sat) This attractive, modern and upscale *parrilla* restaurant is on a pedestrianized street downtown. Plenty of good beef is slapped on the grill, and there are also lamb, pork and fish dishes available – mostly well presented. Homemade pastas and plenty of dessert options round out the menu.

Gran Bar Danzón (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4811-1108; Libertad 1161; mains AR$34-65; ⏲ dinner) It's hard to be hipper than this popular lounge bar–restaurant. A cool-looking conservation system makes it possible for many wines to be offered by the glass, one of which should go well with the duck *confit* with *taleggio* cheese, rabbit ravioli or risotto with king crab.

Empire Bar (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4312-5706; Tres Sargentos 427; mains AR$36-61; ⏲ lunch & dinner Mon-Fri, dinner Sat) This trendy place is good for its tasty Thai cuisine, though the spice factor is toned down for Argentine taste buds. The kitchen puts out crispy wrapped prawns, *paneng* pork in red curry and *tom ka gai* (chicken-and-coconut-milk soup). There are also nearly 80 kinds of vodkas.

Sipan (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4315-0763; Paraguay 624; mains AR$40-70; ⏲ lunch & dinner Mon-Sat) Either come very hungry or with a friend, 'cause the plates at this attractive Japanese-Peruvian restaurant are meant to be shared. Both traditional ('criollo') and Asian-influenced creative dishes *('chifa')* are available; try the 'Sipan roll' (with shrimp, crab, avocado and cream cheese) or well-spiced ceviches.

Recoleta & Barrio Norte

Pura Vida (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4806-0017; Uriburu 1489; juices AR$10-17, snacks AR$16-21; ⏲ 9:30am-10pm Mon-Sat) Step into this healthy juice bar for fruit blends and smoothies. The Green Monster (celery, cucumber and apple) is especially refreshing, and you can add wheatgrass, yogurt, spirulina or bee pollen to your selection. Sandwiches, wraps and salads are available. A second branch (Map pp84–5) has opened in central BA at Reconquista 516.

El Sanjuanino (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4805-2683; Posadas 1515; mains AR$16-25; ⏲ lunch & dinner) The cheapest food in Recoleta, attracting both penny-pinching locals and thrifty tourists. Sit on the main floor or in the basement and order spicy empanadas, tamales or *locro* (a spicy stew), or take your food to go – Recoleta's lovely parks are just a couple of blocks away.

Cumaná (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4813-9207; Rodriguez Peña 1149; mains AR$18-27; ⏲ lunch & dinner) Cumaná specializes in deliciously homey, stick-to-your-ribs pot stews, which are filled and baked with squash, corn, potatoes and/or meats, among other tidbits. Also popular are the pizzas, empanadas, pastas and calzones. Come early if you want a table.

Rodi Bar (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4801-5230; Vicente López 1900; mains AR$20-36; ⏲ breakfast, lunch & dinner Mon-Sat) A great option for well-priced, unpretentious food in upscale Recoleta. This traditional restaurant with fine old-world atmosphere and extensive menu offers something for everyone, from inexpensive combo plates to relatively unusual dishes such as liver stuffed with nuts. Opens very early in the morning.

Grant's (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4801-9099; General Las Heras 1925; lunch AR$22-30, dinner AR$30-33; ⏲ lunch & dinner) This *tenedor libre* (all-you-can-eat) offers a fantastic assortment of foods too numerous to mention. There are also plenty of *parrilla* and dessert selections. The price depends on the meal and on the day of the week; drinks are mandatory and cost extra.

Como en Casa (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4816-5507; www.tortascomoencasa.com; Riobamba 1239; mains AR$22-32; ⏲ breakfast, lunch & dinner Tue-Sat, breakfast & lunch Sun & Mon) Gorgeous cafe-restaurant in Barrio Norte, with an elegant atmosphere. Best for its shady patio, complete with large fountain and surrounded by grand buildings – a must on a warm day. This location has a few dinner options; their other branches (see website) have mostly fancy pastries and sandwiches, salads or crepes.

Natural Deli (Map pp88-9; ☎ 4822-1228; Laprida 1672; mains AR$24-30; 🕒 8am-9:30pm Mon-Sat, 9am-8:30pm Sun) Modern, organic deli offering delicious natural foods. Choose from creative gourmet sandwiches and wraps, fresh salads or vegetarian tarts. You can add echinacea and ginseng to their healthy juices and *licuados,* and there's even a small health food store for take-home treats. Also at Gorostiaga 1776 (Map pp88–9), which has a yoga studio.

La Olla de Felix (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4811-2873; Juncal 1693; mains AR$30-42; 🕒 lunch & dinner Mon-Fri, dinner Sat) This wonderful French bistro comes full of personality and cozy atmosphere – there's a different soup tureen on every table (as decoration) and animated Felix Rueda, the chef, is often on the dining floor greeting return patrons. There are only five items on the menu, which changes daily, but all are well-prepared, tasty choices – and the service is attentive.

Munich Recoleta (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4804-3981; RM Ortiz 1871; mains AR$36-60; 🕒 lunch & dinner Wed-Mon) This traditional old place hasn't changed much since Borges was a regular and enjoying its great food; try the *brochettes* (shish kebabs), grilled salmon or nine kinds of ravioli. Just make sure you can stomach the trophy animal heads looking down at you from the wall.

our pick **Oviedo** (Map pp88-9; ☎ 4821-3741; Beruti 2602; mains AR$45-70; 🕒 lunch & dinner) Chef Martin Rabaudino oversees one of the best kitchens in the city. This is a truly elegant place, with professional service and a classy atmosphere. Fish and meat dishes are the specialty; choose from tempting and nonpretentious dishes such as quail with mushrooms, shrimp risotto and seafood paella. The wine list is excellent.

Palermo

BUDGET

La Fábrica del Taco (Map pp88-9; ☎ 4833-3534; Gorriti 5062; tacos AR$7-13; 🕒 lunch & dinner Tue-Sun) You might just feel like you're back in a Mexican beach town at this very casual, colorful taco joint. Authentic Mexican cooks hover at the front grill, slapping together those tasty and familiar tacos (al pastor, carne asada, pollo con queso, vegetariano). There are even *aguas frescas de tamarindo* and jamaica. *Chimichurri* (sauce made of olive oil, garlic and parsley) on the menu, however, brings you back to BA.

Meraviglia (Map pp88-9; ☎ 4775-7949; cnr Gorriti & Angel J Carranza; mains AR$16-20; 🕒 9am-8pm Mon-Sat) Wonderful new airy and bright vegetarian cafe with small but high-quality menu. Choose granola and yogurt for breakfast, and well-prepared salads, tarts and sandwiches for lunch or late afternoon snack. Everything is freshly made with mostly organic ingredients, and a few healthy products are available for purchase.

El 22 Parrilla (Map pp88-9; ☎ 4833-7876; Gorriti 5299; mains AR$17-40; 🕒 lunch & dinner) A cheap unpretentious *parrilla* isn't that easy to find in upscale Palermo Viejo. This casual family-style joint is an exception, serving up huge portions for great prices. The lunch specials are an even better deal, especially if you score a sidewalk table. Several branches around Palermo.

Krishna (Map pp88-9; ☎ 4833-4618; Malabia 1833; mains AR$18-27; 🕒 lunch & dinner Tue-Sun) With colorful decor and low tables, Krishna offers a vegetarian Indian food experience with a multireligious theme – look for Ganesh mixing it up with Jesus, the star of David and even Jimi Hendrix. Order the *thali*, *koftas* (balls of ground vegetables) or stuffed soya *milanesa,* and there's chai, lassis and alcohol-free beer to help wash it all down.

Las Cholas (Map pp88-9; ☎ 4899-0094; Arce 306; mains AR$18-30; 🕒 lunch & dinner) Las Cholas found the golden rule of many successful restaurants: quality food, trendy design and bargain prices. Traditional Argentine foods such as *locro* and *cazuelas* (meat and veggie stews) are worth a shot, but the *parrilla* is also excellent. Expect a wait and so-so service.

MIDRANGE

Il Ballo del Mattone (Map pp88-9; ☎ 4776-4247; Gorriti 5934; mains AR$20-45; 🕒 lunch daily, dinner Tue-Sat) The homemade pastas here can be hit or miss, but the atmosphere – full of funky, artsy touches – is priceless. Not surprisingly, the owner is an artist and the little patio in back has a graffiti mural. Friday nights can be packed – a DJ often spins. Its cafe, a few doors down, is a more peaceful proposition.

our pick **Sarkis** (Map pp88-9; ☎ 4772-4911; Thames 1101; mains AR$22-38; 🕒 lunch & dinner) There's a reason this long-standing, Middle Eastern restaurant is still around – the food is awesome. For appetizers, don't miss the *boquerones* (marinated sardines) or *hojas de repollo rellenas* (stuffed grape leaves). Follow up with lamb in yogurt sauce. At night a fortune teller reads diners' coffee grounds.

Don Julio (Map pp88-9; ☎ 4832-6058; Guatemala 4699; mains AR$22-45; 🕒 lunch & dinner) A *parrilla* highly recommended for its exceptional meat dishes –

LICKING YOUR WAY THROUGH BA

Because of Argentina's Italian heritage, Argentine *helado* is comparable to the best ice cream in the world. Amble into an *heladería* (ice-cream shop), order up a cone (pay first) and the creamy concoction will be artistically swept up into a mountainous peak. Important: *granizado* means with chocolate flakes.

Here are some of the tastiest *heladerías* in town:

Dylan (Map pp84-5; ☎ 0810-3333-9526; Perú 1086, San Telmo)

Freddo (Map pp84-5; ☎ 0810-3337-3336; cnr Quintana & RM Ortiz, Retiro) Many branches; check www.freddo.com.ar, in Spanish.

Heladería Cadore (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4374-3688, Av Corrientes 1695, Congreso)

Persicco (☎ 0810-333-7377) Belgrano (Map pp82-3; Vuelta de Obligado 2092); Las Cañitas (Map pp88-9; Migueletes 886); Palermo (Map pp88-9; Salguero 2591)

Una Altra Volta (Map pp88-9; ☎ 4805-1818; Av del Libertador 3060, Palermo) Also at the corner of Quintana and Ayacucho, Recoleta (Map pp84–5).

Vía Flaminia (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4342-7737;I Av Florida 121, Microcentro)

it's as good as its fancier neighbors, but with much more traditional feel. Nice corner location with sidewalk tables, and the wine list is also better than average.

Bio (Map pp88-9; ☎ 4774-3880; Humboldt 2199; mains AR$23-36; ⓥ lunch daily, dinner Tue-Sun) The health-conscious should make a beeline to this casual corner joint, which specializes in healthy, organic and vegetarian fare. Feed your body and soul quinoa risotto, seitan curry, mushroom stir-fries and mustard tofu with yamani rice.

Bar Uriarte (Map pp88-9; ☎ 4834-6004; Uriarte 1572; mains AR$25-48; ⓥ lunch & dinner) One of Palermo's trendiest and best restaurants, and beautiful to boot. Sample the marinated pork with ginger and salvia, cooked in their adobe oven (where their gourmet pizza is baked). Other delicious dishes include the lamb carpaccio or *noquis* de ricotta.

Mama Racha (Map pp88-9; ☎ 4833-4950; Costa Rica 4602; mains AR$26-33; ⓥ breakfast, lunch & dinner) Sitting on the rooftop terrace on a hot day, looking over Plaza Palermo Viejo, you might feel life can't get any better than this. Then your salmon and arugula salad with lemonade arrives, and you'll know it can. The wood-block menu also has good creative salads, sandwiches and breakfast choices, but service can be slow.

Novecento (Map pp88-9; ☎ 4778-1900; Av Báez 199; mains AR$30-49; ⓥ breakfast, lunch & dinner) Full breakfasts (a rarity in BA) are served at this elegant corner restaurant; go for the French toast, eggs benedict or waffles with fig syrup. There's brunch on weekends, when dishes are brought to you (all-you-can-eat; AR$90 for two). Dinner means things like beef carpaccio and salmon farfalle.

Voulezbar (Map pp88-9; ☎ 4802-4817; Cerviño 3802; mains AR$33-49; ⓥ breakfast, lunch & dinner Mon-Sat) It's worth the trek out to Palermo Chico to sit at this popular corner cafe. Fresh, creative cuisine includes Patagonian trout and shrimp risotto. For lighter, less expensive fare, come for lunch – the baby calamari, grilled squash and lox salads are awe-inspiring, or try a burger or even the tasty *ceviche*.

TOP END

Miranda (Map pp88-9; ☎ 4771-4255; Costa Rica 5602; mains AR$37-52; ⓥ lunch & dinner) Popular for its reasonably priced steaks, Miranda is a fashionable, modern *parrilla* with concrete walls, high ceilings and rustic wood furniture, but the food is the main attraction here. The meat is good quality and grilled to perfection, and if you score a sidewalk table on a warm day, life for a carnivore just doesn't get much better.

Olsen (Map pp88-9; ☎ 4776-7677; Gorriti 5870; mains AR$37-54; ⓥ lunch & dinner Tue-Sat, 10:30am-8pm Sun) Olsen is famous for its Sunday brunch, but dinner isn't bad either; order manchego cheese ravioli or slow-cooked lamb with krein cabbage. Lunches are prix fixe and the best deal, plus you can see the peaceful garden better. The popular bar serves more than 50 kinds of vodka, assiduously kept at -18°C.

Astrid & Gastón (Map pp88-9; ☎ 4802-2991; Lafinur 3222; mains AR$40-70; ⓥ lunch & dinner Mon-Sat) Likely BA's fanciest Peruvian restaurant, dishes include cream of shrimp soup, crab with avocado and cherry tomatoes, duck in dark beer sauce and – of course – several kinds of delicious *ceviche*. Excellent pisco sours (if a bit pricey), exquisite desserts and very attentive service.

Azema (Map pp88-9; ☎ 4774-4191; AJ Carranza 1875; mains AR$42-58; ⓥ dinner Mon-Sat) Run by eccentric chef Paul Jean Azema (who has cooked for Kurt Cobain, among others) is this restaurant that serves up 'French colony cuisine' – an interesting array of Asian, French and Argentine fusions. Dishes run the gamut from Vietnamese spring rolls to Tandoori chicken salad to rabbit in Dijon mustard and Chardonnay. Seafood dishes are great and the kitchen isn't afraid of using its spices.

DRINKING

Cafes

Cafes are an integral part of *porteño* life, and you shouldn't miss popping into one of these beloved hangouts to sip dainty cups of coffee and nibble biscuits with the locals. There are plenty of cafes in the city, and while you're walking around seeing the sights you're bound to run across one and find an excuse for a break. Some cafes are old classics and guaranteed to take you back in time.

Most cafes serve all meals and everything in between: breakfast, brunch, lunch, afternoon tea, dinner and late-night snacks. For a background on these enduring legacies of Argentine social history, see the boxed text (below).

Café de los Angelitos (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4952-2320; Rivadavia 2100) Originally called Bar Rivadavia, this spot was once the haunt of poets, musicians…even criminals. Recently restored to its former glory, this historic cafe is now an elegant hangout, modernized by offering tango shows to tourists. Come during the day, order a cup of tea and enjoy a slice of the shady past.

Clásica y Moderna (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4812-8707; Av Callao 892) Catering to the literary masses since 1938, this cozy and intimate bookstore-cafe continues to ooze history from its atmospheric brick walls. It's nicely lit, offers plenty of reading material and serves upscale meals. There are also regular live performances of folk music, jazz, bossa nova and tango.

El Gato Negro (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4374-1730; Av Corrientes 1669) Tea-lined wooden cabinets and a spicy aroma welcome you to this pleasant little sipping paradise. Enjoy cups of imported coffee or tea along with breakfast and dainty *sandwiches de miga* (thinly sliced white-bread sandwiches). Tea is sold by weight, and exotic herbs and spices are also on offer.

La Biela (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4804-0449; Av Quintana 600) A Recoleta institution, this classic landmark has been serving the *porteño* elite since the 1950s, when racing-car champions used to come here for their java jolts. The outdoor front terrace is unbeatable on a sunny afternoon, especially when the nearby weekend *feria* (street market) is in full swing – but it'll cost you 20% more.

La Puerto Rico (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4331-2215; Adolfo Alsina 416) One of the city's historic cafes, going strong since 1887. Located a block south of Plaza de Mayo, it serves great coffee and pastries, the latter baked on the premises. Old photos on the walls hint at a rich past and the Spanish movies that have been filmed here. A good place to come that's not too touristy.

our pick **Las Violetas** (Map pp82-3; ☎ 4958-7387; Rivadavia 3899) Dating back to 1884, this historic coffeehouse was renovated in 2001. Lovely awnings and stained-glass windows, high ceilings, cream-colored Ionic columns and gilded

BUENOS AIRES' CAFES

Thanks to its European heritage, Buenos Aires has a serious cafe culture. *Porteños* will spend hours dawdling over a single *café cortado* (coffee with milk) and a couple of *medialunas* (croissants), discussing the economy, politics or that latest football game.

Some of the capital's cafes have been around for over a hundred years, and many still retain much of their original atmosphere. They've always been the haunts of Argentina's politicians, anarchists, intellectuals, artists and literary greats. **London City** (p122) boasts that Julio Cortázar wrote his masterpiece *The Prizes* at one of its tables, while the **Richmond** (p122) says Jorge Luis Borges drank hot chocolate there. The most famous is **Café Tortoni** (p124), which is beautiful but way too touristy.

Most cafes offer a surprisingly wide range of food and drinks; you can order a steak as easily as a *cortado*. Some double as bookstores or host live music, tango shows and other cultural events. Hanging out at one of these atmospheric cafes is part of the Buenos Aires experience – and also makes a welcome break from all that walking you'll be doing.

details make this cafe the most beautiful in BA. Breakfast, lunch and dinner service is available, along with a luxurious afternoon tea. Located in Almagro.

London City (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4343-0328; Av de Mayo 599) This swank and classy cafe has been serving java addicts for over 50 years, and claims to have been the spot where Julio Cortázar wrote his first novel. Your hardest work here, however, will most likely be choosing which luscious pastry to consume with your freshly brewed coffee.

Nucha (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4813-9507; Paraná 1343) There *must* be something in the tempting pastry counter – perhaps cheesecake, *medialunas* (croissants) or lightly layered afternoon cake – to go with your imported tea, iced coffee or *mate* (tea-like beverage) at this cute cafe. Crowds flood in for afternoon tea and tasty lunch sandwiches, but breakfast is also served.

Richmond (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4322-1341; Florida 468) Feel like challenging the local male population to a billiards game or a chess match? Then head to the basement at this very traditional cafe. Better yet, go to the main room and sink into a leather chair to admire the Dutch chandeliers and English-style surroundings while sipping hot chocolate – just like Jorge Luis Borges did.

Bars

In a city that never sleeps, finding a good drink (or cup of tea) is as easy as walking down the street. Whether you're into trendy lounges, Irish pubs, traditional cafes or sports bars, you'll find them all within the borders of Buenos Aires.

Argentines aren't huge drinkers and you'll be lucky to see one rip-roaring drunk. One thing they *do* do, however, is stay up late. pMost bars and cafes are open until two or three in the morning, and often until 5am on weekends – or until the last customer stumbles out the door.

And if you like to party with the young international crowd, check out **Buenos Aires Pub Crawl** (☎ 011-15-5464-1886; www.pubcrawlba.com; per person AR$60). Transport to several bars and a nightclub is included, as are free pizza and some beer or wine.

CENTRAL BUENOS AIRES

Casa Bar (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4816-2712; Rodríguez Peña 1150) Run by an American ex-pilot, who spent years rebuilding an old house into this atmospheric bar. Attractions include 50 beers to choose from, US football on TV, pancakes on weekends and BA's best spicy chicken wings. Has a tiny patio in back for smokers.

Debar (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4381-6876; Av Rivadavia 1132) A popular bar in an area not known for its nightlife, Debar has some of BA's greatest rock and hip-hop beats. Businesspeople come for an after-work *trago* (drink), while travelers and expats hit it later in the evening. With a happy hour that runs until midnight every night, everyone is happy. Also does lunch on weekdays.

El Alamo (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4813-7324; Uruguay 1175) El Alamo draws US students and expats with US football, baseball and basketball on TV (not to mention beer pong games on Tuesday). The music's rock, there's pub food for the hungry and they've got a great way of attracting women – every day from noon to midnight, the ladies drink beer for free. Happy hour indeed.

Gibraltar (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4362-5310; Perú 895) One of BA's classic expat pubs, with a cozy atmosphere and an excellent bar counter for those traveling alone. Great exotic food too – try the

WINE TASTING 101

Big on wine? There are a few ways to taste what Argentina's best grapes have to offer. Try a wine tasting!

Casa Coupage (Map pp88-9; ☎ 4833-6354; www.casacoupage.com.ar; Güemes 4382) Run by a friendly Argentine couple, both sommeliers, in their beautiful Palermo Soho apartment. Includes light tables for the wine and a food pairing meal.

Anuva Wines (☎ 4777-4661; www.anuvawines.com) US native Daniel Karlin organizes wine tastings – try five boutique vintages with food pairings. Best of all, he'll send your wines to the USA (arguably BA's most affordable wine-shipping service) and can deliver within the city.

Nigel Tollerman (☎ 4966-2500; www.0800-vino.com) Private wine tastings run by enthusiastic Brit Nigel Tollerman, in his atmospheric basement cellar. He'll also deliver fine-quality Argentine wines to your hotel, and has a premium-wine storage service.

generous Thai, Indian or English dishes, or the sushi on Sunday. For a little friendly competition head to the pool table in back, grabbing a well-priced pint of beer along the way.

Le Cigale (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4312-8275; 25 de Mayo 722) Sultry and moody downtown lounge very popular with both foreigners and *porteños*. There's different music every night, with live bands on Thursday and DJs on Saturday. But it's most popular on 'French Tuesday,' when electronica and French drinks draw the heavy crowds in.

Milión (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4815-9925; Paraná 1048) This elegant and sexy bar is in a renovated mansion. The garden out back is a leafy paradise, overlooked by a solid balcony that holds the best seats in the house. There are elegant tapas to accompany the wide range of cocktails (pay first, then catch the bartender's eye!), while downstairs a restaurant serves international dishes.

Puerta Roja (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4362-5649; Chacabuco 733) There's no sign and you have to ring the bell, but once inside there's hot music and cool vibes, with low lounge furniture in the main room and a pool table tucked behind. Come early for a good seat and to munch on the excellent and cheap food options – there's little space to eat later. Adventurous? Try their 'chili bomb' cocktail.

PALERMO

Many hotels and restaurants in Palermo have great bars; try Home Hotel (p115), **Casa Cruz** (Map pp88-9; ☎ 4833-1112; Uriarte 1658) or **Bangalore** (Map pp88-9; ☎ 4779-2621; Humboldt 1416). For the hippest scene in town, head to Plaza Serrano (in Palermo Viejo) and settle in at one of the many trendy bars surrounding the plaza.

878 (Map pp88-9; ☎ 4773-1098; Thames 878) Enter into a wonderland of elegant, low lounge furniture and red brick walls; if you're a whiskey lover, there are over 100 kinds to try. Tasty classic and original cocktails also lubricate the crowds, happy to revel in the jazz, bossa nova and good old rock music playing on the speakers.

Congo (Map pp88-9; ☎ 4833-5857; Honduras 5329) The highlight at this beautiful and trendy bar is the back patio – *the* place to be seen on hot summer nights. The music is tops too, with DJs spinning almost every night, and inside are elegant low lounges in creative spaces. Full food menu available, along with some tasty, stiff cocktails.

El Carnal (Map pp88-9; ☎ 4772-7582; Niceto Vega 5511) The open-air roof terrace, with its bamboo lounges and billowy curtains, can't be beat for a cool chill-out on a warm summer night. Thursday means pre-Niceto Club drinks, on Friday reggae rocks, and Saturday is dominated by pop and '80s beats.

Kim y Novak (Map pp88-9; ☎ 4777-9081; Güemes 4900) Popular with the gay and expat crowds, this intimate corner bar has great *onda* (vibes). Come before 2am if you want to chat, because it really gets packed in the early hours – especially later in the week when the basement dance floor opens. Try their house drink, the JoJo – made of vodka, ginger, lime and sugar.

Mundo Bizarro (Map pp88-9; ☎ 4773-1967; Serrano 1222) This futuristically retro and stylishly slick lounge bar is open all night on weekends, when everything from old-time American music to hip DJs and jazz stir up the airwaves. Thursday night is ladies' night; if you feel lucky hop on the pole and grab some attention. For the hungry there are hamburgers, or sushi on Monday.

Sugar (Map pp88-9; ☎ 011-15-6894-2002; Costa Rica 4619; 🕒 Tue-Sun) Palermo Soho bar that's super popular for its happy hour, which runs from 8pm to midnight – pints, glasses of wine or mixed drinks are AR$5 each. Attracts foreign students and expats (it's partially expat-run); all servers speak some English. Great eclectic mix of music, from James Brown to the Killers. Come early to avoid lines; weekends have a drink minimum.

Van Koning (Map pp88-9; ☎ 4772-9909; Av Báez 325) Great rustic spaces make this intimate Las Cañitas pub feel like the inside of a boat; after all, it's a 17th-century-style seafaring theme complete with dark-wood beams, flickering candles and blocky furniture. Filled with Dutch expats on the first Wednesday of the month.

ENTERTAINMENT

Nonstop Buenos Aires offers endless possibilities for entertainment. Dozens of venues offer first-rate theatrical productions, independent or contemporary movies, sultry tango shows, raging dance parties and exciting sports matches.

Most newspapers publish entertainment supplements on Friday; the *Buenos Aires Herald* does one in English called *Get Out*. Also check www.whatsupbuenosaires.com.

Major entertainment venues often require booking through **Ticketek** (☎ 5237-7200; www.ticketek.com.ar). The service charge is about 10% of the ticket price. At *carteleras* (discount ticket offices), you can buy tickets at 20% to 50% off for many entertainment events. Here are three:

Cartelera Baires (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4372-5058; www.carterlerabaires.com; Av Corrientes 1382) In Cine Lorange.

Cartelera Espectáculos (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4322-1559; www.123info.com.ar; Lavalle 742) Right on pedestrian Lavalle.

Cartelera Vea Más (Map pp84-5; ☎ 6320-5319; www.veamasdigital.com.ar; Corrientes 1660, local 2)

Tango

Sensationalized tango shows aimed at tourists are common, and 'purists' don't consider them authentic – though this doesn't necessarily make them bad. Modest shows are more intimate and cost far less, but you won't get the theatrics, the costume changes or the overall visual punch. For discount tickets to some shows, check the *carteleras* (see earlier). Still young, but with some potential, is this tango show review website www.tangotix.com.

For free (that is, donation) tango, head to Galerías Pacíficos, where there are daily performances in front on the pedestrian street. On Sunday in San Telmo, dancers do their thing in Plaza Dorrego (and it's *crowded* – watch your bag). Another good bet is weekends on Caminito in La Boca. All of these dancers are pretty good, so remember to toss some change into their hats.

For tango tours, check www.tangofocus.com. The following is a list of tango shows; for classes and *milongas,* see the boxed text, opposite.

Bar Sur (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4362-6086; cnr Estados Unidos & Balcarce; show & dinner AR$220, show only AR$150) Best for its intimate, traditional atmosphere – there are only a dozen or so tables so everyone gets a good look at the dancers. The schedule is also very flexible – nightly shows run continuously from 8:30pm to 2am, so just show up anytime (though you might need to reserve a table).

Café Tortoni (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4342-4328; www.cafetortoni.com.ar; Av de Mayo 829; show AR$60-70) Buenos Aires' landmark cafe has become overrun with tourists, but the tango shows are relatively good and still affordable. There are up to four shows nightly, but reserve ahead because they do fill up.

Centro Cultural Torquato Tasso (Map p91; ☎ 4307-6506; www.torquatotasso.com.ar; Defensa 1575; shows AR$50-120) One of BA's best live-music venues, with top-name tango *music* performances. Attracts bands that mix genres together, such as fusing tango or *folklórico* with rock; keep an eye out for La Chicana, Sexteto Mayor or Fernández Fierro.

El Balcón (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4362-2354; Humberto Primo 461, 1st fl) Located above Plaza Dorrego, this restaurant puts on free shows – but you have to order some food to see them. Shows run at 10pm Saturday and from 1pm to midnight on Sunday.

El Querandí (Map pp84-5; ☎ 5199-1770; www.querandi.com.ar; Perú 302; show & dinner AR$330, show only AR$190) This large corner tango venue is also an elegant restaurant with an upscale atmosphere. The excellent show is one of the better ones in town, taking you through the evolution of tango over the years. One plus is a high stage, which makes viewing easier.

Esquina Homero Manzi (Map pp82-3; ☎ 4957-8488; www.esquinahomeromanzi.com.ar; Av San Juan 3601; show & dinner AR$270-310) An impressively refurbished old cafe, Homero Manzi was named after one of Argentina's most famous tango lyricists. Today you can take tango lessons here, then sit back and watch the show.

Esquina Osvaldo Pugliese (Map pp82-3; ☎ 4931-2142; Boedo 909; show AR$25-28) Also called Recuerdo Café, this casual venue has a small stage in more modest surroundings, with just a few performers doing the fancy footwork. It's at a fraction of the price of Homero Manzi's much fancier tango show, just a block away. Shows Friday and Saturday.

Los 36 Billares (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4381-5696; www.los36billares.com.ar; Av de Mayo 1265) A combination restaurant-cafe-bar–billiards hall, this atmospheric old place has been around for nearly 100 years. It boasts pool tables in back and billiards tables in the basement. Free tango shows Monday through Thursday, minimum AR$20 Friday and Sunday, AR$20 shows (with AR$20 minimum consumption) on Saturday. The food is not great, however.

Piazzolla Tango (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4344-8201; www.piazzollatango.com; Florida 165; show & dinner AR$320, show only AR$210) This beautiful art nouveau theater used to be a red-light cabaret venue. The show put on here now is a combination of old and new; it's based on tradition, but some moves are so athletic they seem more like circus acts.

MILONGAS & TANGO CLASSES

Tango has experienced a renaissance, both at the amateur and professional levels and among all ages. Classes are available just about everywhere, from youth hostels and cultural centers to all the *milongas* (social dance events); and many are now taught in English. Group classes cost anywhere from AR$15 to AR$40, depending on the teacher; private classes cost much more.

Milongas start either in the afternoon or the evening. They're affordable, usually costing AR$10 to AR$30. Don't be surprised to see different *milongas* put on at a single venue, depending on the time or day. Each *milonga* is run by a different promoter, so each will have its own vibe, style, music and table arrangement, as well as age levels and experiences. For a long list of *milongas* and instructors, snag the free *Caserón Porteño Tango Map Guide* or magazines such as *El Tangauta* (www.eltangauta.com) or *BA Tango* (www.londontango.wordpress.com); they're often available from tango shoe stores, tango venues and tourist offices. Or check www.buenosairesmilongas.com.

For a unique outdoor experience, head to the bandstand at the Barrancas de Belgrano park, where the casual *milonga* 'La Glorieta' takes place on Sunday evenings at around 8pm (free tango lessons given earlier).

Club Gricel (Map pp82-3; ☎ 4957-7157; www.clubgriceltango.com.ar; La Rioja 1180) This old classic (far from the center, take a taxi) attracts an older, well-dressed crowd. Wonderful aging wood dance floor and occasional live orchestras.

Confitería Ideal (Map pp84-5; ☎ 5265-8069; www.confiteriaideal.com; Suipacha 384, 1st fl) The mother of all historic tango halls, with many classes and *milongas* offered pretty much continuously. Live orchestras often accompany dancers; shows almost nightly. Good for beginners.

El Beso (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4953-2794; Riobamba 416) Another traditional and popular place that attracts some very good dancers. Located upstairs, with an intimate feel and a convenient bar as you enter.

La Catedral (Map pp88-9; ☎ 011-15-5325-1630; Sarmiento 4006, 1st fl) If tango can be trendy and hip, this is where you'll find it. The grungy warehouse space is very casual, with funky art on the walls and jeans on the dancers. A great place to come to learn tango, especially if you're young.

La Marshall (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4912-9043; www.lamarshall.com.ar; Maipú 444, 1st fl) Held in Plaza Bohemia on Wednesday and everyone's welcome, but La Marshall is best known for being a gay *milonga*. Come at 10pm for a class, then at 11:30pm the *milonga* starts.

La Viruta (Map pp88-9; ☎ 4774-6357; www.lavirutatango.com; Armenia 1366) Located in the basement of the Asociación Cultural Armenia building. *Milongas* take place Wednesday through Sunday evenings. Best for 'nuevo tango' – mixed dance styles, with rock, salsa and folk music thrown in.

Niño Bien (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4147-8687; Humberto Primo 1462, 1st fl) Takes place on Thursday in Centro Región Leonesa and attracts a wide range of aficionados. It has a beautiful atmosphere, a large ballroom and a great dance floor, but it still gets very crowded (come early and dress well). It's far from the center – it's best to take a taxi.

Salon Canning (Map pp88-9; ☎ 4832-6753; Av Scalabrini Ortiz 1331) Some of BA's finest dancers grace this traditional venue, with a great dance floor and live orchestras. Well-known tango company **Parakultural** (www.parakultural.com.ar) often stages good events here.

Sin Rumbo (Map pp82-3; ☎ 4571-9577; Tamborini 6157) One of the oldest, most traditional tango joints in BA, Sin Rumbo has given rise to a few famous tango dancers. It's a local neighborhood place that attracts older professionals. Best on Friday. Far from the center in Villa Urquiza; take a taxi.

There are many more popular venues, such as Porteño Bailarín, Villa Malcolm, Sunderland and Nuevo Salón Argentina (with its El Arranque *milongas*).

Taconeando (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4307-6696; www.taconeando.com; Balcarce 725; dinner show AR$180, show only AR$140) One of the smaller and more reasonably priced upscale shows. There's tango dancing after the professionals are done. Shows Thursday to Sunday only

Nightclubs

BA's *boliches* (discos) are the throbbing heart of its world-famous nightlife. To be cool, don't arrive before 2am (or even 3am) and dress as stylishly as you can. Taking a nap before dinner helps keep you up all night. Admission

sometimes includes a drink; women often pay less than men. Payment for admission and drinks is nearly always in cash only. Some clubs offer dinners and shows before the dancing starts.

Check out the website www.whatsupbuenosaires.com for current happenings. There are many last-minute parties happening in BA at any one time, so ask around. Massively popular annual event-parties include the South American Music Conference (see p108) and Creamfields (see p108).

For one of BA's biggest and most unique parties, check out **La Bomba de Tiempo** (www.labombadetiempo.com); it's at 7pm every Monday at Ciudad Cultural Konex (p129).

Bahrein (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4314-8886; www.bahreinba.com; Lavalle 345; 🕒 Tue-Sat) Bahrein is hugely popular for its Tuesday night drum 'n' bass parties – highlighted with fast, aggressive electronic rhythms by resident DJ Bad Boy Orange. Trance, house and popular tunes round out the music menu, while an elegant upstairs restaurant provides much-needed energy. The club used to be a bank; check out the basement 'vault.'

Club Aráoz (Map pp88-9; ☎ 4832-9751; www.clubaraoz.com.ar; Aráoz 2424; 🕒 Thu-Sat) Also known as 'Lost,' this small club's finest hour is on Thursday, when hip-hop rules the roost and the regulars start break dancing around 2am. It's popular with young Americans, and there's no dress code – a good thing, since it gets hot and sweaty. A great casual place to hang with friends, and drinks are well-priced as well.

Crobar (Map pp88-9; ☎ 4778-1500; cnr Paseo de la Infanta Isabel & Freyre; 🕒 Fri & Sat) The current darling of the BA club world. Friday nights always feature international DJs mashing up the latest electronic selections, while Saturday has more commercial beats and a younger crowd. There's also a back room for those who prefer classic rock, '80s remixes and occasional live bands, while the main levels are strewn with mezzanines and walkways for those perfect viewpoints.

Maluco Beleza (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4372-1737; www.malucobeleza.com.ar; Sarmiento 1728; 🕒 Wed & Fri-Sun) Located in an old mansion is this popular Brazilian *boliche*. It gets really packed with crowds happily grinding to samba fusion music and watching lithe, half-naked dancers squirming on the stage; it's lots of fun. Upstairs it's darker and more laid-back. If you're craving Brazilian cuisine, get here at 10pm on Wednesday for the dinner.

Museum (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4771-9628; www.museumclub.com.ar; Perú 535; 🕒 Wed, Fri & Sat) This cavernous disco is best known for its Wednesday night 'after-office' party (read: meat market), which starts at 8pm. It's a huge space with multiple balconies and a great sound system. Saturday nights feature incredible light shows and techno/house music. Note the amazing building, an old factory designed by Eiffel (who also did that Parisian landmark).

Niceto Club (Map pp88-9; ☎ 4779-9396; www.nicetoclub.com; Niceto Vega 5510; 🕒 Thu-Sat) One of the city's biggest and long-running crowd-pullers, Club 69 is back in the saddle after a few years off. Expect everything from half-naked break-dancers to large humping drag queens in elaborate costumes; very popular with the gay crowd. Buenos Aires' biggest DJs entertain, with edgy international acts an occasional treat. Get buzzed beforehand at El Carnal (p123), just across the street.

Pachá (Map pp88-9; ☎ 4788-4280; www.pachabuenosaires.com; near cnr Av Costanera Norte & La Pampa; 🕒 Fri & Sat) Famous international DJs spin tunes for the youthful, spruced-up and snobby crowds at this huge electronica club (slightly past its peak but still fun). Laser lightshows and a great sound system keep the blissed-out masses entranced. Saturday nights are best, but don't come until after 4am – giving you time to party watching the sunrise on the terrace (bring your shades).

Rumi (Map pp88-9; ☎ 4782-1307; www.rumiba.com; Av Figuero Alcorta 6442; 🕒 Tue-Sat) If you're looking for glamour, fashion and possible celebrity sightings, then ultracool and highbrow Rumi is your mecca. Dress well to satisfy the picky bouncers, then enter into a wonderland of electronica, hip-hop and house beats. Famous DJs spin on Wednesday nights, but weekends are equally popular; if you're gay, come on Thursday.

Classical Music

Teatro Colón (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4378-7344; www.teatrocolon.org.ar; Libertad 621) BA's premier venue for the arts, Teatro Colón has hosted prominent figures such as Placido Domingo and Luciano Pavarotti. There's also ballet, opera and occasional free concerts. See also p98.

La Scala de San Telmo (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4362-1187; www.lascala.org.ar; Pasaje Giuffra 371) This small San Telmo venue puts on classical and contemporary concerts featuring piano, tango, musical comedy and musical-related workshops.

Teatro Avenida (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4384-0519; www.balirica.org.ar; Av de Mayo 1222) This beautiful 1906 venue highlights mostly classical music, ballet and flamenco – but its biggest strength is opera.

Teatro San Martín (Map pp84-5; ☎ 0800-333-5254; www.teatrosanmartin.com.ar; Av Corrientes 1530) Along with art exhibitions, ballet, photography, cinema and theater, this large complex also hosts classical ensembles.

Teatro Coliseo (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4816-3789; www.fundacioncoliseo.com.ar; MT de Alvear 1125) Classical arts entertain here, with occasional surprises such as Argentine-American rock star Kevin Johansen.

Live Music

ROCK & BLUES

The following are smaller venues that showcase mostly local groups; international stars tend to play at large venues such as soccer stadiums or Luna Park (see below). Blues isn't as popular as rock, but still has its own loyal following.

El Samovar de Rasputín (Map p91; ☎ 4302-3190; Del Valle Iberlucea 1232; ⓥ Sat) Located across from its original location (where there are photos of Napo, the hippie-ish owner, with Keith Richards, Eric Clapton and Pavarotti). Argentine bands entertain with rock and blues most of the time. Bus 29 gets you here from the city center.

La Trastienda (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4342-7650; www.latrastienda.com; Balcarce 460; ⓥ nightly) The large theater in the back of the restaurant here can entertain over 700 people, and showcases all sorts of live groups (mostly rock and reggae). Look for headers such as Charlie Garcia, Los Divididos, Marilyn Manson and the Wailers.

Luna Park (Map pp84-5; ☎ 5279-5279; www.lunapark.com.ar; cnr Bouchard & Corrientes) Originally a boxing stadium, this huge stadium has a capacity of 15,000 and is the fateful location where Juan Perón met Eva Duarte (aka Evita), and where Maradona got married.

Mitos Argentinos (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4362-7810; Humberto Primo 489; ⓥ Fri & Sat) This cozy old brick house in San Telmo has lots of tables, a perfectly sized stage and a small balcony above. Known for its tributes to *rock nacional* (Argentine rock) bands; good for scouting out upcoming new talent. Limited dinner options.

ND/Ateneo (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4328-2888; www.ndateneo.com.ar; Paraguay 918; ⓥ nightly) Theater with good acoustics and quality concerts, especially rock, jazz and folk. Also puts on films, theater and other artsy shows, and in 2008 hosted the Buenos Aires International Jazz Festival.

JAZZ

Clásica y Moderna cafe (p121) occasionally hosts jazz groups.

Notorious (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4815-8473; www.notorious.com.ar; Av Callao 966; ⓥ nightly) Slick and intimate, this is one of BA's premier jazz venues. Up front is a CD store; in back, the restaurant-cafe (overlooking a verdant garden) hosts live jazz shows every night.

Thelonious Bar (Map pp88-9; ☎ 4829-1562; www.theloniousclub.com.ar; Salguero 1884; ⓥ nightly) Cozily ensconced on the 1st floor of an old mansion, this intimate, dimly lit and artsy jazz bar has high brick ceilings and a good sound system. There's great jazz lineups, with DJs entertaining into the early morning hours. Come early for dinner and good seats.

FLAMENCO & FOLK

With so many *porteños* boasting Spanish ancestry, it's not surprising that there are a few flamenco venues in town. Most are located in Congreso's Spanish neighborhood, near the intersection of Salta and Av de Mayo.

Música folklórica also has its place in BA. There are several *peñas* (folk-music clubs) in the city, but other venues occasionally host folk music – keep your eyes peeled.

Ávila Bar (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4383-6974; Av de Mayo 1384; dinner-shows AR$90; ⓥ Wed-Sat) Long-running and cozy Spanish restaurant with pricey shows, but tasty meals are thrown in (drinks extra). Reserve on weekends.

Cantares (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4381-6965; www.cantarestablao.com.ar; Av Rivadavia 1180; shows AR$80; ⓥ Wed-Sat) This intimate flamenco venue once hosted the Spanish poet Federico García Lorca. Dances are highly authentic. Lessons also available.

Guayana (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4381-4350; Lima 27; ⓥ daily, shows Fri & Sat) For great local working-class flavor, try this nondescript *confitería* (cafe offering light meals) with cheap food and surprisingly good music. Live tango and folk tunes play from 10pm on Friday and Saturday night. Reserve a table on Saturday night.

La Peña del Colorado (Map pp88-9; ☎ 4822-1038; Güemes 3657; ⓥ nightly) Nightly folkloric shows are awesome at this rustic, brick-and-stucco restaurant-bar, and afterwards audience members

GAY & LESBIAN BA

There is a live and kicking gay scene in BA, and it's become even livelier since December 2002, when Buenos Aires became Latin America's first city to legalize same-sex unions (then in December 2009, two Argentine men became Latin America's first legally married gay couple). This is likely one reason Buenos Aires has outstripped Rio as South America's number one gay destination. And while BA's November **Marcha del Orgullo Gay** (gay pride parade; www.marchadelorgullo.org.ar) is pretty limited for now, other gay-oriented events – such as an annual **film festival** (www.diversa.com.ar) and even a **tango festival** (www.festivaltangoqueer.com.ar) – have popped up. Let's not forget either that the 2007 gay World Cup took place here.

For general information, there's **Lugar Gay** (p112) in San Telmo. It's a casual B&B but also acts as an information center and organizes activities for guests and nonguests alike. City tours are given by **Comunidad Homosexual Argentina** (CHA; ☎ 4361-6382; www.cha.org.ar). Other resources include **Grupo Nexo** (☎ 4374-4484; www.nexo.org), while gay websites in English include www.thegayguide.com.ar and www.buenosaires.queercity.info.

There are quite a few choices for gay-owned accommodations, such as the **Axel Hotel** (p112), **Lugar Gay** (p112) and **Bayres B & B** (Map pp88-9; www.bayresbnb.com). For information on gay-tolerant apartments, check the two gay websites above or www.friendlyapartments.com; also see p109.

There's lots of gay-oriented literature; keep an eye out for *La Otra Guía* (www.laotraguiaweb.com.ar), *Gay Maps* (www.gaymaps.org) and *The Ronda* (www.theronda.com.ar), available at many businesses. Heftier magazines such as *Imperio* can be bought at some newsstands.

There is plenty of nightlife to keep you out all night long. Gay-friendly restaurants include fancy **Chueca** (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4115-7214; Olga Cossetini 1545), **Empire Bar** (p118) and **Rave** (Map pp88-9; ☎ 4833-7832; Gorriti 5092).

Popular gay bars include the glitzy **Bulnes Class** (Map pp88-9; ☎ 4861-7492; Bulnes 1250), loud **Sitges** (Map pp88-9; ☎ 4861-3763; Av Córdoba 4119) and casual **Flux** (Map pp84-5; ☎ 5252-0258; MT de Alvear 980). **Pride Café** (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4300-6435; Balcarce 869) and **Kim y Novak** (p123) attract mixed crowds, while **Casa Brandon** (Map pp88-9; ☎ 4858-0610; www.brandongayday.com.ar; LM Drago 236; 🕒 Wed-Sun) is a restaurant-bar–art gallery–cultural center. For a fun night of 'guided' drinking, check out **Out & About Pub Crawl** (www.outandaboutpubcrawl.com).

For dancing, rough-and-tumble **Amerika** (Map pp88-9; ☎ 4865-4416; Gascón 1040; 🕒 Thu-Sun) and sexy **Glam** (Map pp88-9; ☎ 4963-2521; José Antonio Cabrera 3046; 🕒 Thu-Sat) are some of the best traditional nightclubs. On Friday nights **Crobar** (see pp88–9) is popular with gays, while **Axel Hotel** (see pp84–5) has summer pool parties on Sunday, and Friday night DJ parties year-long. Ask around for the most current hot gay cruising spots or parties such as Friday night's **Fiesta Plop** (www.facebook.com/fiestaplop).

Lesbians don't have nearly as much choice as gay men. There's the long-running, intimate **Bach Bar** (Map pp88-9; JA Cabrera 4390) and, for dancing, trendy **Verona** (Map pp84-5; ☎ 011-15-5427-2962; Hipólito Yrigoyen 968; 🕒 Fri & Sat) – best visited on Saturday, when it's lesbians-only allowed in. For more information on the lesbian scene, check out **La Fulana** (www.lafulana.org.ar), a sort of lesbian cultural center.

Finally, gay classes and *milongas* are given at **La Marshall** (www.lamarshall.com.ar), **Tango Queer** (Map pp88-9 and Map pp84-5; www.tangoqueer.com) and **Lugar Gay** (p112).

pick up guitars to make their own entertainment. Try the tasty northern Argentine food, and wash it down with *mate*.

Tiempo de Gitanos (Map pp88-9; ☎ 4776-6143; www.tiempodegitanos.com.ar; El Salvador 5575; dinner-shows AR$70-90; 🕒 Wed-Sun) This Palermo Hollywood venue offers good flamenco shows in an intimate restaurant setting, but – unlike the dancing – the tapas and seafood paella might be less than authentic. Reserve in advance.

Theater

Av Corrientes, between Avs 9 de Julio and Callao, has traditionally been the capital's center for theater, but there are now dozens of venues throughout the city. The following venues include both the traditional and the alternative. See also Teatro Colón (p98 and p126) and Teatro San Martín (p127).

Abasto Social Club (Map pp88-9; ☎ 4862-7205; www.abastosocialclub.com.ar; Humahuaca 3649) A small

venue with weekend performances and concerts, along with a cafe-bar. Various classes and workshops.

Ciudad Cultural Konex (Map pp88-9; ☎ 4864-3200; www.ciudadcultural.org; Sarmiento 3131) Has multidisciplinary performances that often fuse art, culture and technology. It hosts an amazing Monday-night percussion show called La Bomba de Tiempo.

El Camarín de las Musas (Map pp88-9; ☎ 4862-0655; www.elcamarindelasmusas.com.ar; Mario Bravo 960) Trendy venue offering contemporary dance, plays and theatrical workshops. There's a good cafe-restaurant in front.

Espacio Callejón (Map pp88-9; ☎ 4862-1167; www.callejonteatro.com.ar; Humahuaca 3759) A small independent venue showcasing new theater, music and dance, and offers a few classes.

Teatro Nacional Cervantes (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4816-4224; www.teatrocervantes.gov.ar; Libertad 815) Architecturally gorgeous theater featuring three halls, a grand lobby and red-velvet chairs – but could use a facelift. Has good productions at affordable prices. See also p101.

Teatro Gran Rex (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4322-8000; Av Corrientes 857) A huge theater seating 3500, this place hosts a myriad of musical productions, from Cyndi Lauper to Kenny G.

Teatro Presidente Alvear (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4374-6076; www.teatrosanmartin.com.ar; Av Corrientes 1659) Inaugurated in 1942 and named after an Argentine president whose wife sang opera, this theater holds over 700 and shows many musical productions, including tango.

Cinemas

BA is full of cinemas, both historical neon classics and slick modern multiplexes. The traditional cinema districts are along pedestrian Lavalle (west of Florida) and on Av Corrientes, but newer cineplexes are spread throughout the city; most large shopping malls have one. Tickets cost AR$15 to AR$20; matinees and midweek shows are cheapest.

Check out the *Buenos Aires Herald* for original titles of English-language films. Except for kids' films, most movies remain in their original language (with Spanish subtitles).

Sports

Fútbol is a national obsession and witnessing a live game part of the BA experience; see the boxed text, p130. For specifics on Argentine *fútbol*, check out www.afa.org.ar and www.futbolargentino.com.ar (both in Spanish).

The most popular clubs are **Boca Juniors** (Map p91; ☎ 4362-2260; www.bocajuniors.com.ar; Brandsen 805) and **River Plate** (Map pp82-3; ☎ 4789-1200; www.cariverplate.com.ar; Presidente Figueroa Alcorta 7597), but Buenos Aires has two dozen professional football teams – the most of any city in the world.

Other popular spectator sports include rugby, basketball, polo and field hockey. *Pato* (like rugby on horseback) deserves an honorable mention for being the most 'traditional.'

SHOPPING

Despite a major drop in the purchasing power of the Argentine peso over the last few years, Buenos Aires' citizens continue to shop as if there's no tomorrow. Just a peek into the nearest mall on a weekend will have you wondering how people who seem to be making so little can spend so much. As the saying goes, 'An Argentine will make one peso and spend two.'

In the Microcentro, Florida is a multipurpose pedestrian strip that buzzes with shoppers, while Av Santa Fe is a bit less pedestrian-friendly but equally prominent as the city's main shopping artery. San Telmo is ground zero for antiques, and Av Pueyrredón near Once train station is *the* place for cheap (and low-quality) clothing. Jewelry shops are found on Libertad south of Corrientes. Leather jackets and bags are cheapest on Calle Murillo (600 block), in Villa Crespo.

For the most unique and avant garde fashions, Palermo Viejo is the place to be. Here the city's youthful and up-and-coming designers have set up shop alongside trendy boutiques (not to mention dozens of fashionable restaurants). Not only are the fashions creative and beautiful, but compared with the US and Europe they're bargains.

As in other Western countries, bargaining is not acceptable in most stores. High-price items such as jewelry and leather jackets can be exceptions, especially if you buy several. At street markets you can try negotiating for better prices – just keep in mind you may be talking to the artists themselves, who generally don't make much money. San Telmo's antiques fair is an exception; prices here are often inflated for tourists.

One thing to be aware of is whether you're quoted in pesos or dollars. Most sellers quote in pesos, but a few unscrupulous ones switch to dollars after striking a deal. Make sure of your position if you have any doubts.

GOING TO A FÚTBOL GAME *David Labi*

In the land where Maradona is God, going to see a *fútbol* (soccer) match is a religious experience. The *superclásico* match between the two classic *porteño* teams Boca Juniors and River Plate has been called the number one sporting event to do before you die; but even the less-celebrated games will give you insight into a national passion.

Barring summer (January and February) and winter (July and August) breaks, two leagues and two international cup competitions provide plenty of opportunities for viewing silky ball-skills and learning some colorful vocabulary you won't find in any phrasebook.

If you want to see a *clásico* – a match between two of the major teams – it is inadvisable to go to the stadium to buy tickets. People will have been waiting there all night, and the atmosphere is not exactly friendly. Plus Boca doesn't even put tickets for its key matches on sale – all tickets go to *socios* (members). Instead, you're better off going with an agency such as Tangol (see p94) or www.vamosalacancha.com. Expect to pay around AR$250 for a *clásico,* and AR$400 for a *superclásico*. Not cheap, but it's much easier (and safer) getting a ticket this way.

For lesser games, it's perfectly easy to get your own ticket. Keep an eye on the clubs' websites, which inform when and where tickets will be sold. Boca sell tickets on match day mornings, while River tends to sell three days in advance. Some tickets can be nabbed online, at www.ticketek.com.ar.

The official price for *popular* (terraces/bleachers) tickets is AR$30 to AR$35, while *platea* (seated stands) can vary from AR$60 to AR$200 – and even higher for serious VIP territory.

Dress down, and try to look inconspicuous when you go. Take only minimum cash and keep your camera close. You probably won't get in with water bottles, and food and drink in the stadium is meager and expensive. Arrive no later than an hour before kick off, and even two or three hours for the big matches (just enjoy the insane build-up to the game). And most importantly – don't wear the opposing team's colors. Perhaps gray is the safest bet?

Bearing all this in mind, you're ready to have some fun! The *superclásico* is justly the most famous game. You can feel the Boca stadium, dubbed La Bombonera (chocolate box) because of its shape, shake as the crowd jumps. And you might even glimpse God himself swinging his shirt above his head, in his lifetime seat above an enormous portrait. That's Maradona, just to make it clear.

For more on *fútbol* and Maradona, see p44.

Antiques & Art

Appetite (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4331-5405; Chacabuco 551; 🕒 2-7pm Mon-Sat) To see what's happening in the contemporary erotic art world, take a peek into this grungy space and expect fantasy, sexual and sometimes violent themes.

En Buen Orden (Map pp84-5; ☎ 011-15-5936-2820; Defensa 894; 🕒 11am-6:30pm) If you like sorting through endless shelves full of knickknacks such as old jewelry, little medals, old lace, musty shoes and antique figurines, then this place is for you.

Galería Ruth Benzacar (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4313-8480; Florida 1000; 🕒 11:30am-8pm Mon-Fri) The first contemporary art gallery in BA, this underground space shows off internationally known Argentine artists such as Leandro Erlich, Jorge Macchi, Flavia Darin and Nicola Costantino. You're welcome to show up and have a look around.

Gil Antiguedades (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4361-5019; Humberto Primo 412; 🕒 11am-1pm & 3-7pm Tue-Sun) Find antiques galore here, including baby dolls, china plates, old lamps, feather fans, Jesus figures and huge glass bottles. Best of all is the basement – it's stuffed with some amazing vintage clothing and accessories, some of which is in their annex.

Imhotep (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4862-9298; Defensa 916; 🕒 11am-6pm Sun-Fri) Come find the funkiest old knickknacks at this eccentric shop. Small oddities such as Indian statuettes, ceramic skulls, Chinese snuff boxes, precious stone figurines and gargoyles make up some of the bizarre trinkets here. Larger prize finds may include a boar's head or a slot machine.

Mercado de las Pulgas (Map pp88-9; cnr Álvarez Thomas & Dorrego; 🕒 10am-6pm Tue-Sun) This dusty and dim covered flea market sells antiques such as old furniture, glass soda bottles, ceramic vases, paintings, bird cages, elegant mirrors and metal garden furniture. Prices aren't cheap, so bargain.

Camping Equipment

Camping Center (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4314-0305; Esmeralda 945; 🕒 10am-7pm Mon-Fri, to 5pm Sat) This modern store carries new, high-quality camping and mountaineering equipment, rock-climbing gear and general backpacking products. There's also plenty of expensive, outdoor name-brand clothing imported from the USA.

Montagne (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4312-9041; Florida 719; 🕒 10am-8:30pm Mon-Sat, noon-8pm Sun) This shop sells outdoor clothing that is stylish, good quality and made in Argentina. Choose from a small selection of tents, backpacks and camping gear upstairs. There are several other Montagne branches.

Wildlife (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4381-1040; Hipólito Yrigoyen 1133; 🕒 10am-8pm Mon-Fri, 10am-1pm Sat) Crampons, knives, tents, backpacks, climbing ropes, foul-weather clothing and military gear can be found at this somewhat musty-smelling place. Sell your stuff here, too.

Children

Owoko (Map pp88-9; ☎ 4502-9905; El Salvador 4694; 🕒 11am-8pm Mon-Sat, 3-7pm Sun) Every purchase at this small kids' clothes store comes with a free story booklet about Planet Owoko and its colorful characters, who are (conveniently) immortalized on cute T-shirts, pants and accessories.

Recursos Infantiles (Map pp88-9; ☎ 4834-6177; JL Borges 1766; 🕒 3-8pm Mon, 8am-8pm Tue-Sun) Small but fun, this kids' store offers some pretty unique toys – and all are made in Argentina. Books in Spanish and a small rack of cute clothes keep mom busy, and a tiny cafe on the premises caters to hungry little bellies.

TAXES & REFUNDS

Taxes are included in quoted or marked prices: what you see is what you pay. Some places, however, might add a *recargo* (surcharge) to credit-card purchases – ask before you buy.

If you buy more than AR$70 in merchandise from a store that displays a 'Tax-Free Shopping' sticker, you're entitled to a tax refund. Just ask the merchant to make out an invoice for you (you'll need ID); upon leaving the country show the paperwork to a customs official, who'll stamp it and tell you where to obtain your refund.

Clothing & Accessories

Bolivia (Map pp88-9; ☎ 4832-6284; Gurruchaga 1581; 🕒 11am-8pm Mon-Sat, 3-8pm Sun) There's almost nothing here that your young, hip and possibly gay brother wouldn't love, from the striped cut-off cowboy shirts to the floral Puma sneakers to the Mexican-bag-fabric plastic belts. Metrosexual to the hilt, and paradise for the man who isn't afraid of patterns, plaid or pastels. There are three branches in town.

Gabriella Capucci (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4815-3636; Av Alvear 1477; 🕒 10:30am-8pm Mon-Sat) All-original sequined T-shirts, wispy scarves, vintage tops, velvet pillows and eclectic accessories fill this ever-changing, girly boutique. Crocheted flowers decorate camouflage, satin and animal prints, and the costume jewelry is wild.

Hermanos Estebecorena (Map pp88-9; ☎ 4772-2145; El Salvador 5960; 🕒 11am-8pm Mon-Sat) The Estebecorena brothers apply their highly creative skills toward original, highly stylish, very functional men's clothing that makes the artsy types swoon. Selection is limited, but what's there really counts.

Moebius (Map p91; ☎ 4361-2893; Defensa 1356; 🕒 10:30am-1:30pm & 3-8:30pm Tue-Sat, noon-8:30pm Sun) Highly original bags, retro knickknacks, handmade jewelry and ingeniously designed women's clothes are highlights here, but you'll never know exactly what you'll find. The recycled-material items are always the most fun.

Nadine Zlotogora (Map pp88-9; ☎ 4831-4203; El Salvador 4683; 🕒 11am-8pm Mon-Sat) Nadine's gorgeous dresses and tops combine feminine styles with nearly magical fabrics, creating fantastically romantic wearables. Thick and billowy base textiles are layered with lacy tulle and silky edging – a feast for the eyes as well as the skin.

Objeto (Map pp88-9; ☎ 4771-4934; Gurruchaga 1335; 🕒 11am-8pm Mon-Sat) The designers here display some of the wackiest, most outrageously fun clothes in town. Outfits are less frilly and more substantial than most of their *porteño* designer colleagues – think of dresses with multiple patterns accented with cartoons or silhouetted figures. Great gear for parties.

Rapsodia (Map pp88-9; ☎ 4833-5814; El Salvador 4757; 🕒 10am-9pm) With fabrics from linen to leather, street casual to sequins, this larger boutique shop is a must for fashion mavens. There are cutting-edge jeans, wild bikinis and even a small kids' section, plus sofas for the guys to sit on as they wait. Several branches in town.

Crafts & Souvenirs

Arte y Esperanza (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4343-1455; Balcarce 234; 🕒 10am-6pm Mon-Fri) This store sells fair-trade, handmade products that include many from Argentina's indigenous craftspeople. Items are well-made and include jewelry, pottery, textiles, *mate* gourds, baskets, woven bags and animal masks (along with other wood-carved items). Also in Retiro at Suipacha 892 (Map pp84–5).

Atípica (Map pp88-9; ☎ 4833-3344; El Salvador 4510; 🕒 2-8pm Mon-Fri, 11am-7pm Sat) This tiny shop stocks crafts from Argentine artists who use indigenous techniques for their works. All are handmade and unique, and include picture frames, wall hangings, mask replicas, gourd bowls, small boxes, textiles and jewelry. Quality is high and prices fair.

Kelly's Regionales (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4311-5712; Paraguay 547; 🕒 10am-8pm Mon-Fri, to 3pm Sat) Cowhides, Mapuche ponchos, animal masks, alpaca knives and *mate* gourds are all good ethnic buys at this large souvenir shop, but plenty of cheap souvenir knickknacks also line the shelves.

Housewares

Calma Chicha (Map pp88-9; ☎ 4831-1818; Honduras 4909; 🕒 10am-8pm Mon-Fri, 11am-8pm Sat, noon-8pm Sun) Big on leather, this fun household spot has a variety of butterfly chair styles and brightly colored cowhide rugs. Penguin pitchers, flowery plastic tablecloths and thick sheepskins are other must-haves.

Cualquier Verdura (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4300-2474; Humberto Primo 517; 🕒 noon-8pm Thu-Sun) Located in a lovely, refurbished old house, this very fun store sells eclectic items from vintage clothing to entertaining soaps to recycled floppy-disc lamps to novelty toys. Note the *mate*-drinking Buddha above the fountain in the patio.

Music

El Ateneo (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4325-6801; Florida 340; 🕒 9am-10pm Mon-Fri, to 5pm Sat) Buenos Aires' landmark bookseller stocks a limited number of books in English and also has a decent selection of music CDs. There are several branches within the city, including a gorgeous branch in the Gran Splendid, an old renovated cinema (Map pp84–5; Av Santa Fe 1860). Hours vary by store.

Zival's (Map pp84-5; ☎ 5128-7500; www.tangostore.com; Av Callao 395; 🕒 9:30am-10pm Mon-Sat) One of the better music stores in town, especially when it comes to tango, jazz and classical music. Listening stations and a big sale rack are pluses, and it'll ship CDs, DVDs and sheet music abroad too (check the website). Also in Palermo Viejo at Serrano 1445 (see Map pp88–9).

Shoes & Leather Goods

28 Sport (Map pp88-9; ☎ 4833-4287; Gurruchaga 1481; 🕒 11am-8pm Mon-Sat) Focusing on only one product and one style – men's 1950s sport-style shoes – the cobblers here can concentrate on quality and craftsmanship. Inspiration comes from football, boxing and bowling shoes, and only 12 pairs of each design are produced.

Casa López (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4311-3044; MT de Alvear 640/658; 🕒 9am-8pm Mon-Fri, 9:30am-7pm Sat, 10am-6pm Sun) Start up the limousine and make sure there's enough room for some of BA's finest selection of quality leather jackets, luggage, bags and accessories. A downside: service is almost too attentive. Another branch is at Galerías Pacífico (p95).

Mishka (Map pp88-9; ☎ 4833-6566; El Salvador 4673; 🕒 11am-8pm Mon-Sat) Well-regarded designer Chelo Cantón was an architect in a previous incarnation, but now creates glittery, low-heeled shoes with a retro-hip, feminine and slightly conservative vibe. There are purses and bags also and another branch in Paseo Alcorta shopping mall (see p107).

Rossi y Carusso (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4814-4774; Av Santa Fe 1377; 🕒 9:30am-8pm Mon-Fri, 10am-7pm Sat) Fine leather goods line the shelves at this upscale shop. Choose from fancy boots, belts, bags, saddles, gaucho knives and the occasional silver *mate* vessel. All are made from Argentine materials, and most are exclusive designs.

Shopping Malls

Alto Palermo (Map pp88-9; ☎ 5777-8000; Av Coronel Díaz 2098; 🕒 10am-10pm) This popular, shiny mall offers dozens of clothing shops, bookstores, jewelry boutiques, and electronics and houseware stores. Look for Timberland, Lacoste, Hilfiger and Levis (plus many Argentine brand names, too). Services include a food court, cinema complex and a good kids' area on the 3rd floor.

Buenos Aires Design (Map pp84-5; ☎ 5777-6000; Av Pueyrredón 2501; 🕒 10am-9pm Mon-Sat, noon-9pm Sun) The trendiest and finest home furnishings are all under one roof here. This is the ideal place to look for that snazzy light fixture,

BUENOS AIRES STREET MARKETS

Some of BA's best crafts and souvenirs are sold at its many street markets, often by the artists themselves. You may have to sort through some tacky kitsch, but you'll also find creative and original art. A plus is the 'free' (donation) entertainment from buskers and mimes.

Feria Artesanal (Map pp84-5; Plaza Intendente Alvear; 🕒 10am-7pm) Recoleta's hugely popular fair, with hundreds of booths and a range of creative goods. Hippies, mimes and tourists mingle; nearby restaurants provide refreshment. Biggest on weekends; located just outside the cemetery.

Feria de Mataderos (Map pp82-3; ☎ Mon-Fri 4342-9629, Sun 4687-5602; www.feriademataderos.com.ar; cnr Avs Lisandro de la Torre & de los Corrales; 🕒 11am-8pm Sun & holidays Apr-Dec, 6pm-midnight Sat Jan-Mar) This unique market is far off in the barrio of Mataderos. There are shows of horsemanship, folk dancing and cheap authentic treats to be had. From downtown, take bus 155, 180 or 126 (one hour); taxis cost at least AR$50. Confirm hours beforehand; it could be closed in January.

Feria de San Telmo (Map pp84-5; Plaza Dorrego; 🕒 10am-5pm Sun) Locals and tourists alike come to this wonderful *feria;* you'll find antique seltzer bottles, jewelry, artwork, vintage clothing, collectibles and donation tango shows. Lots of fun, but keep an eye on your wallet. Some vendors hang around on Saturdays also.

Feria Plaza Belgrano (Map pp82-3; cnr Juramento & Cuba; 🕒 10am-8pm Sat & Sun) Belgrano's pleasant market is great on a sunny weekend. You'll find high-quality imaginative crafts, as well as some kitschy junk. Good for families as it's calmer and less touristy than the more central *ferias*.

Feria Plaza Serrano (Map pp88-9; Plaza Serrano; 🕒 noon-7pm Fri-Sun) Costume jewelry, hand-knit tops, funky clothes, hippie bags and leather accessories fill the crafts booths at this small but lively fair on fashionable Plaza Serrano in Palermo Viejo.

streamlined toilet or reproduction Asian chair. Also good for everyday appliances and housewares, along with cute decor and a few knickknacks.

Galerías Pacífico (Map pp84-5; ☎ 5555-5110; cnr Florida & Av Córdoba; 🕒 10am-9pm Mon-Sat, noon-9pm Sun) Centrally located right on pedestrian Florida, this gorgeous mall with murals on the ceiling is always full of shoppers and tourists. Donation tango shows often play outside. For more information, see p95.

Galería Bond (Map pp84-5; Av Santa Fe 1670; 🕒 10am-9pm Mon-Sat) For the edgiest tattoos and piercings in town, you can't beat this grungy shopping center. Buenos Aires' skateboarder-wanna-bes and punk rockers come here to shop for the latest styles and sounds. Expect everything from Hello Kitty to heavy metal.

Mercado de Abasto (Map pp88-9; ☎ 4959-3400; cnr Corrientes & Anchorena; 🕒 10am-10pm) One of the most beautiful malls in BA, this remodeled old market holds more than 200 shops, a large cinema, a covered plaza, a kosher McDonald's, a good children's museum and even a small amusement park.

Wine

See also p122 for wine-tasting options and wine delivery services.

Lo de Joaquin Alberdi (Map pp88-9; ☎ 4832-5329; www.lodejoaquinalberdi.com.ar; JL Borges 1772; 🕒 11am-9:30pm) Excellent wine shop in Palermo Soho that carries only Argentine brands. Wine tastings with food pairings happen on Thursday.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Air

Buenos Aires is Argentina's international gateway and easily accessible from North America, Europe and Australasia, as well as other capital cities in South America.

Almost all international flights arrive at BA's Ezeiza airport, about 35km south of the center. Ezeiza is a modern airport with good services such as ATMs, restaurants and duty-free shops. There's also an overpriced internet cafe and iffy wi-fi. For more on arriving in Ezeiza, see the boxed text, p135.

Most domestic flights use Aeroparque Jorge Newbery airport, a short distance north of downtown BA. Flight information for both airports, in English and Spanish, is available at ☎ 5480-6111 or www.aa2000.com.ar.

Boat

BA has a regular ferry service to and from Colonia (see p555) and Montevideo (see p539), both in Uruguay. Ferries leave from the **Buquebus terminal** (Map pp84-5; cnr Avs Antártida Argentina & Córdoba). There are many more launches in the busy summer season.

Bus

If you're heading out of town you'll probably have to visit BA's modern **Retiro bus terminal** (Map pp84-5; Av Antártida Argentina). It's 400m long, three floors high and has slots for 75 buses. The bottom floor is for cargo shipments and luggage storage, the top for purchasing tickets and the middle for everything else. There's an **information booth** (☎ 4310-0700; 🕒 24hr) that will help you find the right long-distance bus company to your destination; it's located near the escalators at the southern end of the terminal. Other services include a **tourist office** (☎ 4313-0187; 🕒 7:30am-2:30pm Mon-Fri) near Puente 3, on the main floor under bus counter 105; telephone offices (some with coin-accessed internet), cafes and many small stores.

You can buy a ticket to practically anywhere in Argentina and departures are fairly frequent to the most popular destinations. Reservations are not necessary except during peak summer and winter holiday seasons (January, February and July). And remember to keep an eye on your bags!

Here are some sample destinations; be aware that ticket prices vary widely according to bus company, class, season and inflation.

Destination	Cost (AR$)	Duration (hr)
Bariloche	245	20
Comodoro Rivadavia	308	24
Córdoba	150	10
Foz do Iguaçu (Brazil)	200	19
Mar del Plata	90	6
Mendoza	250	13
Montevideo (Uruguay)	140	9
Puerto Iguazú	280	19
Puerto Madryn	270	20
Punta del Este (Uruguay)	159	12
Rosario	50	4
Santiago (Chile)	260	22

Retiro bus terminal is connected to the local bus system, but it's a giant snarl and hard to figure out. There's a nearby Subte station and Retiro train station. Street taxis are numerous, though *remises* (call taxis) are generally more secure – there are two small *remise* booths near bus slots 8 and 9 that are open 24 hours.

Train

Privately run trains mostly connect Buenos Aires' center to its suburbs and nearby provinces. The three main central stations are served by Subte, see p136. Here are some destinations outside BA:

Destination(s)	Station	Contact
Bahía Blanca/Carmen de Patagones*	Constitución (Map pp82–3)	(☎ 4304-0028; www.ferrobaires.gba.gov.ar)
Concordia/Posadas	Federico Lacroze** (Map pp82–3)	(www.trenesdellitoral.com.ar)
La Plata***	Constitución (Map pp82–3)	(☎ 0800-1-2235-8736)
Luján***	Once (Map pp82–3)	(☎ 0800-333-3822; www.tbanet.com.ar)
Mar del Plata or Tandil or Pinamar	Constitución (Map pp82–3)	(☎ 4304-0028; www.ferrobaires.gba.gov.ar)
San Isidro/Tigre/Rosario/Córdoba or Tucumán	Retiro (Map pp84–5)	(☎ 0800-333-3822; www.tbanet.com.ar, www.ferroctransa.com.ar)
San Isidro/Tigre	Olivos**** (off Map pp82–3)	www.trendelacosta.com.ar

* The weekly Bahía Blanca–Carmen de Patagones leg is very slow and services are canceled periodically.
** Federico Lacroze station is reached by Subte line B.
*** La Plata is reached via the suburban Roca line; Luján by the Sarmiento line.
**** Olivos station is reached by taking the suburban Mitre line from Retiro.

GETTING AROUND

To/From the Airport

If you're traveling solo, the best way to and from Ezeiza is to take a shuttle with transfer companies such as **Manuel Tienda León** (MTL; Map pp84-5; ☎ 4315-5115; www.tiendaleon.com; cnr Av Eduardo Madero & San Martín). You'll see its stand immediately as you exit airport customs. Shuttles cost AR$40 to AR$45 one way, run every half hour from 6am to midnight and take about 40 minutes, depending on traffic (for two people the price is AR$70). It'll deposit you either at its office (from where you can take a taxi) or at some central hotels. Avoid its taxi service at the airport, which is overpriced at AR$146; if you want to take a taxi just go past the transport 'lobby' area, through the doors to the reception area and – avoiding *all* touts – find the freestanding city taxi stand (blue sign that says 'Taxi Ezeiza'), which charges AR$98 to the center (or save AR$3 and head outside the airport doors to another taxi stand called GCBA, with a yellow sign). For tips on how to avoid getting ripped off in a taxi, see p136.

EZEIZA ARRIVAL & DEPARTURE TIPS

As of January 2010, citizens from several countries have to pay a 'reciprocity fee' *(tasa de reciprocidad)* when they land in Ezeiza. This is equal to what Argentines are charged for visas to visit those countries. These fees include US$131 for US citizens, US$70 for Canadians and US$100 for Australians. The fee is payable in cash, credit card or traveler's check and is usually good for 10 years (per entry for Canadians though – sucks, eh?).

To change money at Ezeiza, don't go to any *cambio* (exchange house). Their rates are bad; for better rates, pass the rows of transport booths, go outside the doors into the reception hall and veer sharply to the right to find Banco de la Nación's small office; it's open 24 hours and has an ATM (there's another ATM nearby, next to Farmacity, and yet another way beyond, at the airline counters).

For shuttles and taxis from Ezeiza to the center, see opposite. There's a helpful **tourist information booth** (24hr) just beyond the city's taxi stand.

When leaving Ezeiza on an international flight, passengers had to pay a departure tax. Tickets bought after March 2009, however, should have this tax included in the ticket price.

If you're heading straight to Aeroparque (the domestic airport), taxis from Ezeiza cost about AR$115; MTL's shuttles are AR$45.

Real shoestringers can take public bus 8, which costs AR$2 and can take up to two hours to reach the Plaza de Mayo area. Catch it outside the Aerolíneas Argentinas terminal, a short walk (150m) from the international terminal. You'll need change for the bus; there's a Banco de la Nación just outside customs.

If you're living it big, however, contact US expat Fred at **Silver Star Transport** (in the USA 214-502-1605, in Argentina 011-15-6826-8876; www.silverstarcar.com). He'll pick you up at Ezeiza in his Lincoln town car and deliver you to your hotel for AR$295. Fred also does city tours.

There are also car-rental agencies at Ezeiza, but we generally don't recommend driving in Buenos Aires.

To get from Aeroparque to the city center, take public bus 33 or 45 (don't cross the street; take them going south). MTL has shuttles to the center for AR$15; taxis cost around AR$25.

Bicycle

BA is not a great city for cycling. Traffic is dangerous and hardly respectful toward bicycles; the biggest vehicle wins the right of way, and bikes are low on the totem pole. Still, some spots call out for two-wheeled exploration, such as Palermo's parks and the Reserva Ecológica Costanera Sur; on weekends and some weekdays you can rent bikes at these places. You can also join city bike tours (see p107); these companies sometimes rent bikes.

Bus

BA has a huge and complex bus system. If you want to get to know it better, you'll have to buy a *Guia T* (bus guide); they're sold at any newsstand, but try to find the handy pocket version (AR$8). Just look at the grids to find out where you are and where you're going, and find a matching bus number. If you are familiar with BA, check www.xcolectivo.com.ar. Most routes (but not all) run 24 hours.

Save your change like it's gold; local buses do not take bills. Bus ticket machines on board will, however, give you small change from your coins. Most rides around town cost AR$1.25. Offer your seat to the elderly, pregnant and women with young children.

Route	Bus no
Microcentro to Palermo Viejo	111
Microcentro to Plaza Italia (Palermo)	29, 59, 64
Retiro to Plaza de Mayo/San Telmo	22
Recoleta to Congreso/San Telmo/La Boca	39
Plaza Italia to Microcentro/San Telmo	29
Plaza Italia to Once/Plaza de Mayo/La Boca	64
Plaza Italia to Retiro/Plaza de Mayo/La Boca	152, 29
Plaza Italia to Recoleta/Microcentro/Constitución	59

Car

Anyone considering driving in BA should know that most local drivers are reckless, aggressive and even willfully dangerous. They'll ignore speed limits, road signs, lines and traffic signals. They'll tailgate mercilessly and honk even before signals turn green. Buses are a nightmare to reckon with, potholes are everywhere, traffic is a pain and parking can be a bitch. Pedestrians seem to beg to be run over at times.

On the other hand, public transport is great and taxis are cheap and plentiful.

If, after all these tips, you still insist on renting a car, expect to pay around AR$190 per day. You'll need to be at least 21 years of age and have a valid driver's license; having an international driver's license isn't crucial. You'll need to present a credit card and your passport, though.

Avis (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4326-5542; www.avis.com.ar; Cerrito 1527)
Hertz (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4816-8001; www.hertzargentina.com.ar; Paraguay 1138)
New Way (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4515-0331; www.newwayrentacar.com; Marcelo T de Alvear 773)
Victory (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4381-4731; victory_rentacar@hotmail.com; Lima 509)

Motorcycle

For motorcycle rentals, be at least 25 years of age and head to **Motocare** (Map pp82-3; ☎ 4782-1500; www.motocare.com.ar; Esteban Echeverria 738, Vicente Lopez). Honda Transalps 650 and 700 cost about AR$420 per day with a five-day minimum (it's cheaper by the month). Bring your own helmet and riding gear. Crossing into Chile, Uruguay, Paraguay and Brazil is allowed (permissions required for the latter three countries). If you buy a motorcycle here you can negotiate to sell it back, possibly saving money in the long term. Staff are English-speaking.

Car-rental company Victory rents scooters, too.

Subte (Underground) & Train

BA's **Subte** (☎ 4555-1616; www.subte.com.ar) opened in 1913 and is the quickest way to get around the city, though it can get mighty hot and crowded during rush hour. It consists of Líneas (Lines) A, B, C, D, E and H. Four parallel lines run from downtown to the capital's western and northern outskirts, while Línea C runs north–south and connects the two major train stations of Retiro and Constitución. Línea H runs from Once south to Av Caseros, with future expansion plans.

One-ride magnetic cards for the Subte cost AR$1.10. To save time and hassle buy several rides, since queues can get backed up. If you're planning on staying in BA for a while, the **Monedero card** (www.monedero.com.ar) is a convenient, rechargeable card that you can use to enter the Subte, plus buy some products at the stations and get certain discounts.

At some stations platforms are on opposite sides, so make sure of your direction *before* passing through the turnstiles.

Subte trains operate from 5am to (around) 10:30pm Monday to Saturday and 8am to (around) 10pm on Sunday and holidays. Service is frequent on weekdays; on weekends you'll wait longer.

By contrast, the suburban train system is of little use to travelers:

Belgrano line (www.ferrovias.com.ar) Retiro station to the northern suburbs.
Mitre line (www.tbanet.com.ar) Retiro to Belgrano, San Isidro, Tigre and beyond.
Roca line Constitución station to the southern suburbs and La Plata.
San Martín line Retiro to the northern suburbs.
Sarmiento line (www.tbanet.com.ar) Once station to the southwestern suburbs and Luján.

Taxi & Remise

Buenos Aires' very numerous (about 38,000) and cheap taxis are conspicuous by their black-and-yellow paint jobs. The meter should always be used and the fare ticks upwards about every two blocks when the vehicle is moving (you'll pay for waiting in stuck traffic, too). It's customary to let drivers keep small change. Taxis looking for passengers will have a red light lit on the upper right corner of their windshield.

Almost all taxi drivers are honest workers making a living, but there are a few bad apples in the bunch. Do not to give the driver large bills; not only will they usually not have change, but there have been cases where the driver quickly and deftly replaces a larger bill with a smaller (or fake) one. One solution is to state how much you are giving them and ask if they have change ('*¿Tiene usted cambio de un veinte?*' – Do you have any change for a 20?).

Be especially wary of receiving counterfeit bills; at night have the driver *prender la luz* (turn on the light) so you can carefully count and check your change (look for a watermark on bills).

Pretend to have an idea of where you're going; a few taxis offer the 'scenic' route (though also be aware there are many one-way streets in BA). A good way to do this is to give the taxi driver an intersection rather than a specific address. Also, if you are obviously a tourist going to or from a touristy spot, don't ask how much the fare is beforehand; this makes quoting an upped price, rather than using the meter, tempting.

Finally, make an attempt to snag an 'official' taxi. These are usually marked by a roof light and license number printed on the doors. Official drivers must display their license on the back of their seat or dashboard; you can write down the taxi's details in case of problems or forgotten items.

Most *porteños* recommend you call a *remise* instead of hailing street cabs. *Remises* look like regular cars and don't have meters. They cost a bit more than street taxis but are more secure, since an established company sends them out. Most hotels and restaurants will call a *remise* for you.

AROUND BUENOS AIRES

So you've spent days tramping on noisy and busy streets, visiting all the sights and smells of BA. You're ready to get away from the capital and experience something different and more peaceful. So where do you go?

Luckily, there are several trips that can be done in a day, but a few are better if you have more time to spare. Luján (p144) is a religious mecca, while San Antonio de Areco (p146) features peace and the occasional gaucho theme. La Plata (p142) is a mini-version of Buenos Aires, with an amazing cathedral.

For something different, head across the Rio de la Plata into neighboring Uruguay; Montevideo (p539) is a laid-back capital city with a much slower pace, while Colonia (p555) offers some cobbled streets and old-time atmosphere. The ritzy resort of Punta del Este (p576) provides sun, sand and stars – celebrities, that is.

Some options much closer to BA are presented following.

SAN ISIDRO

About 22km north of Buenos Aires is peaceful and residential San Isidro, a charming suburb of cobblestone streets lined with graceful buildings. The historic center is at Plaza Mitre and its beautiful neo-Gothic cathedral; on weekends the area buzzes with a crafts fair. There's a **tourist office** (☎ 4512-3209; Libertador 16362; 🕒 8am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-6pm Sat & Sun) at the plaza.

A stroll through the rambling neighborhood streets behind the cathedral will turn up some luxurious mansions (as well as more-modest houses) and the occasional view toward the coast. Close by is also the Tren de la Costa's San Isidro station, with a fashionable outdoor shopping mall to explore.

Once owned by Argentine icon, General Pueyrredón, the **Museo Histórico Municipal General Pueyrredón** (☎ 4512-3131; Rivera Indarte 48; admission free; 🕒 10am-6pm Tue & Thu, 2-6pm Sat & Sun) is an old colonial villa set on spacious grounds with faraway views of the Río de la Plata. Don't miss the algarrobo tree under which Pueyrredón and San Martín planned strategies against the Spanish. To get here from the cathedral, follow Av Libertador five blocks, turn left on Peña and after two blocks turn right onto Rivera Indarte.

Even more glamorous is the Unesco site **Villa Ocampo** (☎ 4732-4988; Elortondo 1837; admission Thu & Fri AR$6, Sat & Sun AR$15; 🕒 12:30-6pm Thu-Sun), a wonderfully restored mansion and reminder of a bygone era. Victoria Ocampo was a writer, publisher and intellectual who dallied with the literary likes of Borges, Cortázar, Sabato and Camus. The gardens are lovely here; tours and a cafe are also available.

Getting There & Away

The best way to reach San Isidro is via the **Tren de la Costa** (www.trendelacosta.com.ar), whose BA terminal (Maipú) is in the suburb of Olivos. Get to Maipú station in BA on bus 59 or 152; some 60s buses also go (ask the bus driver). The Mitre train line from Retiro train station (downtown) also reaches Maipú (at Mitre station). You can also go directly to San Isidro with buses 60 and 168.

TIGRE & THE DELTA

The city of Tigre (35km north of BA) and the surrounding delta region is one of the most popular weekend getaways for weary *porteños*. The city itself has a few pleasant attractions, but it's really the delta just beyond Tigre that everyone's after. Latte-colored waters – rich with iron from the jungle streams flowing from inland South America – will hardly remind you of a blue paradise, but there are hidden gems in this marshy region. Boat rides into the delta offer peeks at local stilt houses and colonial mansions, and you can explore along some peaceful trails. Many lodgings are located throughout the region, making getaways complete. All along the shorelines are signs of water-related activity, from kayaking to wakeboarding, canoeing to sculling.

Information

Tourist Office (☎ 4512-4497; www.tigre.gov.ar; 🕒 8am-6pm) Located behind McDonald's; will help you sort out the complex delta region. There's a smaller booth (☎ 4512-4547) at the train station.

Sights & Activities

Tigre itself is very walkable and holds some attractions. Be sure to check out the **Puerto de Frutos** (Sarmiento 160; 🕒 10am-6:30pm), where vendors sell mostly housewares, wicker baskets and dried flowers, along with a modest selection of fruits. Weekends are best, when a large crafts fair sets up. Nearby is Tigre's amusement park, **Parque de la Costa** (☎ 4002-6000; www.parquedelacosta.com.ar; admission AR$38-49). Call for current hours.

The **Museo Naval** (Naval Museum; ☎ 4749-0608; Paseo Victorica 602; admission AR$3; 🕒 8:30am-5:30pm Mon-Fri, 10:30am-6:30pm Sat & Sun) traces the history of the Argentine navy with an eclectic mix of historical photos, model boats and airplanes, artillery displays and pickled sea critters. For something special, visit the **Museo del Mate** (☎ 4506-9594; www.elmuseodelmate.com; Lavalle 289; admission AR$10; 🕒 10am-6pm Tue-Sun), which has over 2000 items dedicated to the national drink. There's a *mate* cafe as well (of course).

Tigre's fanciest museum is the **Museo de Arte Tigre** (☎ 4512-4093; Paseo Victorica 972; admission AR$5; 🕒 9am-7pm Wed-Fri, noon-7pm Sat & Sun). Located in an old (1912) social club, this beautiful art museum showcases famous Argentine artists from the 19th and 20th centuries. The building itself is worth a visit.

The waterways of the delta offer a glimpse into how locals live along the peaceful canals, with boats as their only transportation. Frequent commuter launches depart from Estación Fluvial (located behind the tourist office) for various destinations in the delta (AR$17 to AR$31 round trip). A popular destination is the **Tres Bocas neighborhood**, a half-hour boat ride from Tigre, where you can take residential walks on thin paths connected by bridges over narrow channels. There are several restaurants and accommodations here. The **Rama Negra** area has a quieter and more natural setting with fewer services, but is an hour's boat ride away.

Several companies offer inexpensive boat tours (AR$30 to AR$45, 1½ hours), but commuter launches give you flexibility if you want to go for a stroll or stop for lunch at one of the delta's restaurants.

Tours

Bonanza Deltaventura (☎ 4728-1674; www.deltaventura.com) Offers adventures that include walks, canoe trips, bike rides, horseback rides and *asados*.

El Dorado Kayak (☎ 011-15-6503-6961; www.eldoradokayak.com) Does kayaking tours deep inside the delta; all equipment and lunch included.

Floating Tours (☎ 4572-5078; www.tigredeltatours.wordpress.com) Door-to-door service from BA to Tigre; boat trips with small groups and English-speaking guides.

Sleeping & Eating

The huge delta is dotted with dozens of accommodation possibilities, from camping to B&Bs to *cabañas* to beach resorts to activity-oriented places. The further out you are, the more peace and quiet you'll experience (but bring mosquito repellent). Since places are relatively hard to reach – you generally arrive by boat – the majority also provide meals.

The Tigre tourist office has photos of and information on all accommodation places, and many are listed on its website (www.vivitigre.com.ar). The following places are in Tigre itself. Prices listed are for Saturday night, when you should always book ahead; on weekdays, rates can plummet up to 30%.

Tigre Hostel (☎ 4749-4034; www.tigrehostel.com.ar; dm AR$60, s AR$120-180, d AR$240-300; 💻 📶) Located in an old mansion, this hostel offers large dorms and nice bunks, but the kitchen is ordinary. Private rooms are spacious and some share bathrooms. A large garden and back decks are great hangout areas, and an annex nearby has more rooms.

Casona La Ruchi (☎ 4749-2499; www.casonalaruchi.com.ar; Lavalle 557; s/d AR$160/210; 💻 📶 🚭) This family-run B&B is in a beautiful mansion (built in 1893) that's showing its age. Most of the five romantic bedrooms have balconies; all have shared bathrooms with original tiled floors. There's a pool and large garden out back.

Hotel Villa Victoria (☎ 4731-2281; www.hotelvillavictoria.com; Liniers 566; AR$350-535; ❄ 💻 🚭) Run by an Argentine-Swedish family, this boutique hotel is more like a fancy guesthouse. Only six simple yet elegant rooms are available, and there's a clay tennis court and pool out back. Swedish, French and English are spoken.

La Soñada (☎ 4731-4004; www.bybtigre.com.ar; Anastasio El Pollo 1786; r AR$380-590; ❄ 💻 🚭) For a homey feel, there's this casual, family-run place. The five rooms are comfortable but not

luxurious, and there's a large grassy garden with pool and covered dining area.

As far as food goes, Tigre's cuisine is not cutting-edge, but dining can be atmospheric. Stroll Paseo Victorica, the city's pleasant riverside avenue. For an upscale meal, try **Maria Luján** (☎ 4731-9613; mains AR$36-55; breakfast, lunch & dinner), which also has a great patio boasting river views.

Getting There & Away

There are four main ways to get to Tigre. From Retiro train station (downtown BA) take a train straight to Tigre (one hour). You can also take bus 60 (marked 'Panam') straight to Tigre (1½ hours).

The nicest way to reach Tigre, however, is via the **Tren de la Costa** (www.trendelacosta.com.ar; local/foreigner AR$7/12; trains every half hour) – a pleasant electric train with attractive stations and some water views. This train line starts in the suburb of Olivos; to get there, take a train from Retiro station (Mitre Line) and get off at the Mitre station – then cross the bridge to the Tren de la Costa. Buses 59, 60 and 152 also go to the Tren de la Costa.

You can also take the commuter boat **Sturla** (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4731-1300; www.sturlaviajes.com.ar; cnr Grierson & Juana Manso) straight to Tigre from Puerto Madero. However, there's only one per day, at 6:30pm from Monday to Friday (AR$15, one hour).

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